

INDIAN NATIONALISM

VOL I

[Patriotism, Political Consciousness and National
Integration in Ancient India]

By

DR. A. E. L. AWASTHI

B.A. Hon., M.A., Ph.D.

LUCKNOW UNIVERSITY

स्वाधीन वृत्तेः साफल्यं न पराधीन वृत्तिता ।
ये पराधीनकर्माणो जीवन्तोऽपि न ते मृताः ॥

KAILASH PRAKASHAN
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A HISTORY OF INDIAN CIVILIZATION

To Bangalore

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A HISTORY OF INDIAN CIVILIZATION

BY THE SAME AUTHOR

THE INDIAN SCHEME OF LIFE
THE INDIAN WORKING CLASS
PLANNING THE COUNTRYSIDE
THE LAND PROBLEMS OF INDIA
THE RURAL ECONOMY OF INDIA
BORDERLANDS OF ECONOMICS
THEORY AND ART OF MYSTICISM
REGIONAL SOCIOLOGY
FOOD PLANNING FOR FOUR HUNDRED
MILLIONS
MAN AND HIS HABITATION
MIGRANT ASIA
THE INSTITUTIONAL THEORY OF ECONOMICS
THE POLITICAL ECONOMY OF POPULATION
THE SOCIAL STRUCTURE OF VALUES
THE SOCIAL FUNCTION OF ART
THE DYNAMICS OF MORALS
THE SYMBOLIC LIFE OF MAN
THE LORD OF THE AUTUMN

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VOLUME I
ANCIENT AND CLASSICAL TRADITIONS

BY
RADHAKAMAL MUKERJEE
*Vice-Chancellor
University of Lucknow*
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August 1956

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The aim of this work is to survey the general course of Indian civilization, one of the oldest civilizations in the chequered history of Man. While not dealing in detail with the incidents and events of political history and the controversies of chronology, it is concerned more directly with the larger movements of history and thought, and the processes of social evolution. There it aims to present by a proper sociological method, a multicultural approach interpreting them in the light of the various myths, religions and art patterns as they appear from age to age. There runs however through this diversity a principle of unity—a fundamental unity of land, diaspora and culture after a universal pattern of belief and faith, and conformity to a metaphysical frame of social order. The work seeks to offer a synoptic and critical examination of the factors and forces that have moulded India's culture, institutions and ways of living, and created that stability and synthesis which mark out her civilization. It endeavours to trace the unifying thread that links together the diverse phases of India's history: the growth of meta-historical norms of order, balance and continuity, applicable to both the cosmic and social spheres, and embodied in art, ethos and worship that have preserved society against trouble and disintegration and conferred on it the integral harmony and universality derived from pure metaphysics.

Indeed the pulse and tempo of India's civilization cannot be properly understood without reference to the Rigoli and Scholasticism that are inseparably fused with the way of life, with the moral code and the social scheme. India's history is not like a chariot driven along the narrow and rugged paths of aggression and violence by the twin powers of Economy and Politics. It is rather the larger car of human progress along the broad highway of humanity, with its mythic and scholastic elements of man's myths, values and ideas, to be found from universal principles in pure scholastic method that pervade and

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cumulatively mould her Social Institutions and Hierarchical Relations, Justice, Law and Polity. These metaphysical and moral values that indeed explain the distinctiveness and vitality of India's culture through the ages are in this volume expounded in their historical context and social implications.

The quality of India's civilization rests entirely on her basic humanist premises of the majesty and dignity of the Real, Universal or Common Man, forming the essence of her ancient Rig-vedic teaching, and the Rig-vedic and Buddhistic conception of Rta or Dharma—the primordial law sustaining the cosmic and social order as well as the specific conduct of individuals. The notion of Dharma defines not merely the whole order of the cosmos in its infinite levels and cycles, but also fixes the specific goals and vocations of individual life. With its corollary, the belief that no human gift or capacity should be exercised for its own sake alone but be dedicated as sacrificial offerings (mahāyajña) for the continuity of life and the universe, this metaphysical concept has dominated Indian thought since the earliest times. It has defied the attempts of successive heterodox and agnostic schools to expel it, and indeed constitutes the essential basis of Indian morality, personal and social, through the ages and among all peoples of India.

Western civilization has on the whole failed to bridge the gulf between the social order and the moral perfection of the individual, and Western thought often, as a consequence, has oscillated between utopianism and revolution. India's greatest single contribution to forming the imagination, and therefore the moral tradition of Asia has been the idea of compassion (karuṇā) or sharing (muditā) which arises directly from her myth of the Homo Universus and the identification of the self with the most extensive abstract Community. Morally speaking, the stress of communion and solidarity as the ~~but motive~~ of individual and social culture mitigates the inequalities of wealth and power, makes the social distance that is inevitable in a land of diverse peoples, cultures and stages of evolution tolerable, and builds up an integrated community on the basis of tolerance, forbearance and contentment (santoṣa) with the limited values of life. Politically and historically speaking, this helps towards the social assimilation of different ethnic groups on the one hand, and the four-fold organic and spiritual ordering of society (varṇa), where there is a downward movement of power or privilege and character or knowledge, on

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the other. Individual struggle and competition and class strife are mitigated through the metaphysical myth of transmigration which is linked up with the moral law of the fruition of good and evil deeds in a long chain of births regulating various levels of life. Just as the myths of immortality, metempsychosis and Karma and the cycles of saṃsāra establish the long-range balance of fortunes and misfortunes through successive incarnations in individual life, so the myths of the cycle of human perfection and degeneration through the Four Ages and of the Divine Incarnation (avatāra), recurrent in macrocosmic history, engender fortitude in adversity and charity in prosperity in collective life. These no doubt have been stabilising factors in Indian history.

The broad course of Indian civilization is no doubt fashioned and directed by the various metaphysical doctrines and myths of humanism. These have been fruitful growths in the Indian soil, and, unlike the Hebraic, Greek, and Christian myths of the West, are still very much alive today. Man's moral demands are here adapted to metaphysics or philosophy, rather than the other way about. The demands of reason, intuition and social feelings indeed converge in a single affirmation of the identity between self and not-self.

Each civilization has its own character and individuality. A student of a historical civilization has to study it in a thoroughly objective manner, and understand the myths, values and experiences it embodies in the light of the insistent social problems it faced and the conditions available for their solution in the past. In India the stress on the metaphysical and mystical side of culture was associated with a relative undervaluation of political power and ambition, although there had been engendered a strong sense of cultural mission and responsibility from the humanitarian adventure of Emperor Asoka across the Himalayas to the establishment of the maritime Gholia Empire in Ceylon, Malaya and Indonesia. This indeed constitutes the paradox of Indian civilization which was seen to extend its frontiers in South-East Asia through its broad humanisms and later forms of her evangelising Buddhism even in the century when the principal cities and centres of culture of Northern India were being ruthlessly ransacked and overrun by fanatical invaders.

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It is noteworthy that both Sultan Mahmud of Ghazni and
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took care to protect and carry away their celebrated masons and other craftsmen to Samarqand. The medieval architecture of Samarqand as well as of Ghazni and Kabul bears ample testimony to the skill and craftsmanship of the Indian masons and stonecutters, whom Amir Khusrau proclaimed as superior to their fellow craftsmen of the whole Muslim world. From the time of the Mauryas right up to the 18th century India retained her pre-eminence as the agricultural mother of Asia and the industrial workshop of the world. Such supremacy maintained through millennia was the outcome of her rich agricultural as well as mineral resources such as silver, copper, lead, zinc, iron and mercury, the development of her science, technology, textile, chemical and metallurgical industries and shipping and the renowned skill of her workmen. It made the country the sink of the world's precious metals and contributed to a remarkable development of the fine arts and luxury industries through the centuries. Indian religion, literature and culture largely followed trade across the caravan routes of Central Asia and China and the sea-routes in the Indian Ocean and Arabian Sea—the Pūrva-sāgara and Pāścīma-payodhi. On the whole, however, neither the lure of trade nor political ambition but irrepressible humanist religious and artistic movements underlie the expansion of the cultural empire of India. In the Buddhist middle ages of Asia this cultural ascendancy was symbolised in the grand Indian Mahāyānic myth of Trailokyavijaya or the spiritual conquest of the earth, heaven and nether world.

The great art and literature of India focus various types of humanist myths, doctrines and ethos and produce new social universalisms for people and culture. This is especially manifest in the eras of renaissance and empire-building. They have achieved assimilation into a unified social system of diverse peoples and races, myths and faiths through what Toynbee calls 'social mimesis', rather than through the coercive processes of militarism, nationalism or racialism. Travelling across geographical boundaries they have left their indelible impress upon the culture of Middle and South-east Asia, of half of mankind belonging to the East. It is her prolific art and literature that led to the spread of her philosophical, religious and cultural movements both within India and abroad to the distant Hindu colonies from the Tarim to the Mekong basin: two widely separated zones in North

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and East, where the mystical and metaphysical culture of India and the practical and humanist culture of her great and ancient neighbour, China, came together in a fruitful and fateful meeting so big with consequences to Asian history.

During the storms and stresses of political changes it is her lofty scripture, sculpture and poetry and her traditional educational system that kept alive the spirit of the people, and their devotion to the ancient myths, values and traditions. The poise and resilience of Indian civilization are abundantly manifest in the many peaks of achievement recorded in diverse fields of man's adventure. These are conspicuously seen in Āruṇi, Yājñavalkya, Buddha, Mahāvira, Gorakhnath and Chaitanya in the field of religion; Kapila, Kaṇāda, Asaṅga, Vasubandhu, Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja and Madhya in the field of philosophy; the Bhagavad-Gītā, the Saddharmapīṇḍarika, the Yogavaśiṣṭha; the Śrīmad Bhāgavata and the Rāmācharita Mānasa as religious classics; Bhāsa, Kālidāsa, Bhavabhūti and Jayadeva in the realm of poetry; Caraka, Suśruta, Āryabhaṭṭa, Brahmagupta, Varāhamihira and Bhāskara in the realm of the positive sciences; Sanchi, Sarnath, Mathura, Ellora, Elephanta, Anurādhapura and Borobudur in the realm of sculpture; Ajanta, Sigiriya and Bamiyan in the realm of painting; Khajuraho, Bhuvanesvara, Tanjore, Halebid, Prambanam and Angkor-Vat in the realm of temple architecture; the monolithic pillars of Aśoka, the iron pillar of Candrar and the silks, muslins and ivories in craftsmanship; and, finally, Chandragupta, Asoka, Akbar, Sivaji, Kṛṣṇa Raya and Ranjit Singh as empire-builders.

A remarkable feature of India's history is that it represents throughout an uninterrupted growth. Unlike Europe, India has not suffered from any long cultural eclipses or dark periods. She has seen many fruitful renaissances and fresh cultural movements, often reacting against political turmoils and crises. Today after five millennia of her history she is again passing through another fateful renaissance. It is because she is ancient and yet active that we can best appreciate in her history both the successes and failures of the past for guidance as to the present and the future in a process of historic continuity. India also has had so many contacts with foreign cultures of different types, pastoral-nomadic, sedentary-agricultural, military or maritime at different stages of her history, and her ways of responding to them have been so varied, that we can profitably study here the factors that underlie the rise and

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decay of new and mature civilized communities. Many a civilization has met with its doom or languished indefinitely as a result of unforeseen catastrophic contact with another civilization by losing the efficiency and potency of vital and cohesive myths, doctrines and ethos that provided the basis of its creative endeavours in history. We see in India's history that long-range or macrocosmic balance and rhythm of human mind and culture that provide the basis and the material for a true philosophy of history. The progress of people rests not on power politics nor on economic aggrandisement, nor again on techniques of world-wide propaganda but on their collective poise springing from a sense of the Universal evolving through the process of time and history so as to reinforce at once the concord and comradeship of One World and the freedom and initiative of the individual personality.

The work is divided into several parts under a common plan that weaves together the trends of social, religious, philosophical and artistic movements in the broad frame of the march of history. Myths of religion, symbols of art and key-norms of social institutions in which are enshrined the vital features of a cultural movement or epoch are selected as foci of socio-historical analysis, bringing to light the character and conscience of the people in different epochs. A special feature of the work is its illustrations of Indian art. Sculpture in India gives supreme expression to what is permanent and universal in man, his perennial vision of serenity, power, compassion and love with overtones of meaning brooding over his progress in the generations. It quietly and confidently directs his social destiny irrespective of the vicissitudes of politics. Thus the various archetypes, motifs and symbols of art which communicate great metaphysical myths, religious truths and moral norms, and record and consolidate momentous social and spiritual movements across the centuries have been especially drawn upon for purposes of historical interpretation and illustration. Art in India in its formative periods has not been, however, metaphysical, hieratic or literary. Its cultural and religious background must no doubt be missed. But it is the creation of abiding forms and rhythms in various regions and phases and its fullness of sense, perception and enjoyment rather than its iconography and symbology that make it significant in the world history of art. These formal values that are usually lost sight of through the stress of classical literary sentiment, idealism or transcendentalism are

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P R E F A C E

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RADHAKAMAL MUKERJEE

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“The time (that has pairs) cooks all things,
In the Great Self, indeed;
But the Comprehensor of that (the impartite,
Absolute Time)

in which time itself
is cooked he knows the Vedas.”
(The Mahābhārata, Upanishad)

“In the universe-children, filled with the boiling
water of stupendous delusion, are being cooked all
creatures by Time with the blazing sun as fire, the
days and nights as fuel and the months and seasons
as the churning ladle. Such are the tidings of the
earth.”
(The Mahābhārata, Upanishad)

“Let us offer our worship to the Eternal, Of
Infinite Forms, Of Stability immeasurable, Of Vision
unbounded, Of Knowledge Absolute. With Arms
all-embracing. With names without number, The
Eternal Witness of all life, The Timeless Holder of
all ages of Time and History. Obsecration to Him.”
(Līṅga-Saṁhitā, Upanishad)

INTRODUCTION

THE INDIAN PHILOSOPHY OF HISTORY

History as Myths and Traditions in Action

History is the flowing, cumulative stream of myths and traditions. The chanting or recital of myths, tales and ballads during festivals marking the cycles of the seasons is the beginning of history, spurring a people to epoch-making adventures. All history is in a sense myth-making. Myths are by no means futile or fictitious as presumed by the nineteenth century historians, who in their turn formulated or tacitly supported the myths of the Individual, State, Nationality, Race, Power, and Progress in the background of European development. Myths poetically and pregnantly embody the traditions, values and aspirations of a people. These are conserved and transmitted by social memory and bind their present to the past in belief, thought and action. The "units of history" are simply myths and traditions in action, what Rickert called "value structures" through which universal values are evidenced in historical actuality—the broad and enduring historical constants that pervade the stable social arrangement and culture of a people, and underlie the recurrent patterns in their social life and development. The process of history is the march towards the realisation of the universal, cosmic myths, traditions and values of mankind, albeit manifest in the diversity of cultural patterns in different regions and epochs.

It is the myth-making function of history that underlies its dynamic force in moulding the social life, morality and culture of a people. "History is past politics." But, as Haizinga has well observed, "History is the intellectual form in which civilization renders account to itself of its past." History is much more than politics or the apotheosis of power. The waxing and waning of power in the struggle between peoples and nations touch only the fringe of history seen in a macro-cosmic perspective.

The more comprehensively the scope and methods of approach are conceived, the more effectively does it recreate the entire culture through the records of past traditions, values and experience.

Historical explanation tends to exaggerate surface motivations and undervalue a people's unconscious motivations in human development. Myths integrate their conscious urges and thought habits with the unconscious urges and repressed complexes. These accordingly comprise a more satisfactory frame of reference for the understanding of their disguised as well as socially approved goals and standards that constitute the true motive forces in history. The dynamic power of myths and traditions rests indeed in history on the fact that these constitute a blend of unconscious, selfish and aggressive and conscious, altruistic and co-operative urges of group action and mass movement. In so far as the modern philosophy of history stresses man's reason, critical faculty and deliberate social policy it suffers from self-deception; as it stresses man's greed, predatoriness and unqualified materialistic motivations it shuts its eyes to the formative role of myths, traditions and values in moulding human nature and to the manifold goals and aspirations of social institutions, the prevalent ways of living and the standards of morality that constitute human civilization. In the older civilizations of India and China myths are multi-functional, covering almost every sector of society, and charged with the values and aspirations of whole cultural movements and epochs. These are assented to and pondered over by successive generations, and obtain new shades of meaning in each through fresh knowledge, experience and sensibility. Thus these are cumulative in the form of social traditions, institutions and values that outlast dynasties and empires and enter into the very fabric of history. More than the affairs of emperors, princes and nobles it is the great myths, traditions, and ethos and the philosophical, religious and social movements these generate and activate that explain the true histories of the Indian and Chinese peoples. No histories of India and China can be real which separate politics from the religion, ethos and broad trend of myths, values and traditions of each age.

The Gestalt Approach to History

Human history is a total cumulative ensemble or gestalt in which the broadening and lengthening warp and woof of human facts and events on the one hand, and myths and traditions on the other are inextricably interwoven in the web of time. The gestalt approach to history as a cumulative, moving, forward-looking whole, with the attention focussed on the dynamism of myths, traditions and values into which the whole can be resolved or split up, makes possible the right understanding and interpretation of human affairs, of "things said and done in the past". Not all myths and traditions are dealt with by history, but only those that have functional significance in the interactive emergent pattern. Such are the "units of history" that have to be chosen or discovered and understood in their context with the present and the future. The reality of myths and traditions consists in their fashioning the cumulative sequence with its order, consistency and laws, which is history. The truth of history is the meaning of this inherent order and continuity of the march of Man amidst the fluctuating fortunes and ephemeral experiences of men, institutions and cultures.

The Philosophy of History as Sociology

Man in history is three-fold: Man the Mutable, Man the Eternal and Man the Deity. History rightly understood is not concerned simply with the growth and decay of peoples, objects and institutions, the careers and vicissitudes of man, finite creature as he is and ordained to perish with all his adventures and achievements. In Indian historiography, embodied in the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas, the classic sources of the country's mythology and tradition, the mutable man is called Nara. History is the inherent order and truth gleaned from the divergent, seemingly chaotic development of human adventures, values and experiences that outlive the transient existence of man. Man is eternal and universal, the inhabitant not of one country and age but of all countries and ages, the maker of enduring myths and traditions and the bearer of the ultimate values, ever projected towards the future. This is the human image which is ever present in the vicissitudes and fluctuating situations of history. In the ephemeral and confused pageant of

history this Eternal and Universal Man is indeed the abiding presence, embodied in, but transcending the limited, fleeting images of mortal man belonging to a race, country, class or historical and cultural epoch. Historical events or sequences in the long, macro-cosmic rhythm show an order or reality which is true history—the eternal frame of man's immutability and universality. The Eternal Man is called Narottama in the Mahābhārata. Finally, there is Man the Deity which is the cosmic urge to advance, manifest in the glory and triumph as well as in the fall and anguish of man, the goal towards which the whole creation moves. This is the Nārāyana of the epic and the Purāṇas. The epic thus begins with the homage to the triple images of Man—Nara or Finite Man, Narottama or Eternal Man and Nārāyana or Deity, moving and being moved in the procession of history: "While adoring Nārāyana, Nara and Narottama and also the goddess of learning, Sarasvatī and Vyāsa, may one make victory issue therefrom." The deity, dharma and victory are inseparable in the Mahābhārata. Vyāsa is the prototype of the sage and chronicler, while Sarasvatī is the Spirit of Wisdom—the muse of the jayanāma or the Saga of victory. The saga records the ultimate triumph of righteousness over evil, each hero standing for a generic attribute of either goodness or wickedness, and culminates in the success of truth, justice and dharma that securely rest in Krishna-Nārāyana actively participating in the vicissitudes of mankind. The supreme lesson that the epic inculcates is that when finite man regains knowledge of his spiritual nativity, "recalling, recalling" the glories of the Divine Truth and Goodness of the past, and becomes united with that Real, Eternal Lord whence he comes, fortune, victory, welfare and morality are eternally assured for him (Bhagavad Gītā, XVIII 76-78).

In India the pattern of historical enquiry and understanding took the form of myths, traditions and episodes of heroes, patriots and saints—gāthā nārasamsi, jayanāma-itihāsa and purāṇa. The Indian historian, following the traditions of Indian historiography, must possess, in the words of the celebrated Kalhana the historian, "the divine perception of the poet resembling Prajāpati" for recreating the past and indicating the significance of past values and experiences for the present generation.

Modern studies of the behaviour of groups, communities and peoples are grounded on the techniques and methods of

geography, psychology, anthropology, economics and sociology. All these sciences must integrate their methods and outlooks for understanding and interpreting social relations, traditions and events of the past. History is tending to become many-sided, multi-cultural—sociological in its content and methods.

The "frame of reference" of history, its classification into periods, its concepts and criteria of classification of social forms (family, clan, tribe, folk, nation, world-community), institutions (occupation, class, caste, technology, manners, morality, law), traditions (economic, political, intellectual, aesthetic, religious) and the pattern and ordering of values are provided by sociology that projects its insights and appraisals relating to the contemporary society meticulously into the past. History is applied social psychology and philosophy, sensitive to the particular qualities and patterns of each historical epoch and culture, and the processes of their genesis, growth and operation from age to age. It is therefore that Paul Barth envisaged the philosophy of history as sociology.

History cannot be simplified into a chapter of geography, economics or politics. The crucial material of history is represented by the manifold myths, values and traditions of men, which have to be identified and ordered from epoch to epoch, and for which historical explanations have to be adduced in order that the knowledge of the past offers the clue to the solution of present problems. For this the understanding of social myths, traditions and ethos from a long-time or macro-cosmic scale is indeed central or primary, as the stress of invasion, war and conquest and their effects on the fate of kingdoms and peoples one-sided or secondary. Even Napoleon, the victor of a hundred battles, once remarked, "History is the only true psychology and the only true philosophy". This is all the more so in a sub-continent like India whose achievements in culture, philosophy and religious and artistic expression, having little or no reference to war and politics, profoundly influenced the society and way of living of half of Asia for well-nigh two thousand years. Myths and the cultural and moral traditions and frames of reference that moved men in past times towards some realisation in collective life certainly carry a greater and more subtle truth than many biographies, inscriptions and documents to which historians usually resort in their analysis of human events. The student

of Indian civilization will do well for obtaining the clues to Indian history to attempt a right understanding and appreciation of the dominant role played by the great myths and traditions of India, alive with metaphysical value and social significance. Indian civilization has passed through various stages or cycles. Sometimes it has become static or moribund, but again it has experienced a new awakening or renaissance. This is due far less to invasion and conquest than to intellectual and religious ferment, impelling a reorientation of traditions and ethos and renewing the devotion of the people towards cherished goals and values. Thus the myths and traditions enter new highways in history.

Civilizations vary in the constructive and vitalising roles of their myths. Where the collective judgment, evaluation and memory of peoples are embodied in enduring myths, these afford quick and easy guidance for them in their manifold struggles and crises. The doctrines and dogmas of the elite cannot in all societies transform themselves into universal myths. They soon exhaust their force and give rise to fresh doctrines and dogmas that increase if not create a gulf between the elite and the rest of society. Thus social action tends to become fitful and haphazard, and the passing doctrines and dogmas themselves become disruptive. It is the rationalism of the European Renaissance and the Protestant Movement that corroded many ancient, pagan and Christian myths in the West, created a divorce between human and cosmic life and destiny, and undermined the Western man's security and poise. This is, no doubt, reflected in the European philosophy of history where myth-making is superseded by a feverish pre-occupation with a linear series of human events governed by the materialistic notions of Progress and Power, and the emphasis of biological, geographic, political, economic and psycho-analytic doctrines for explaining the so-called "scientific" history. The meta-historical consciousness of an abstract eternity and of time-less, recurrent macro-cosmic events has completely receded in the background in European thought ruled by an over-weening scientism or scepticism, though such physical sciences as astronomy, geology and palaeontology have reaffirmed the vision of limitless ages and countless universes.

The Great Myths of India

It is the universal, abiding metaphysical character of myths that constantly fecundates groups, institutions and individuals with a sense of social purpose and destiny. Thus myths become equally compelling as truth and goodness inherent in the structure of the cosmos, and save peoples and cultures from the distractions of immediate and fleeting goals. It is striking that in the epoch of such widespread invasion and unsettlement as the pre-Gupta and post-Gupta periods in Indian history, the hopes, aspirations and tenor of life of the common people were kept alive and safeguarded by the Messianic myth of the Warrior-redeemer (Kalki); while the myths of Varṇa-śaṁkara or caste origin through racial admixture, Apaddharma or modification of the laws of caste and family in social crises and Kaliyuga or epoch of social conflict were invaluable for the social assimilation of the Yavana, Śāka, Hun and other mlechha groups. The Brāhmanic society of the Vedic plan obviously waned. There was widespread violation of the rules and duties of castes and families, as well as of the successive stages of the spiritual life (āśrama). Many mixed castes and the Śūdras rose into social prominence. To Bhāgavatism that rose in the 5th century B.C., Mahāyāna Buddhism and other theistic cults were added between the first and fourth century A.D., and facilitated the large-scale absorption of the foreigners and Śūdras into the traditional social order; while the myths of the ordained, irresistible restoration of dharma protected the people against social confusion and the corrosive influence of foreign political domination over large parts of Bhāratavarṣa. Islam's advent into India with the sword and fire of a fanatical zeal also proved less socially disruptive than in other lands due to the propagation of the various Bhakti cults that found grace and salvation for the faithful, demolishing the boundaries of caste, creed and nation. Indian civilization in its defence against foreign invasion pinned its faith as much in great myth and tradition as in sword and strategy.

The distinctive ancient Indian institution of caste had its genesis in practical social convenience and self-management of congeries of peoples of different stocks and stages of civilization who had to live together in close contiguity and co-operation in

the village communities of the expansive river basins. The Rg-Vedic Aryans formulated the theory that the worthy (*varaṇiya*) and privileged (*dviija*, twice-born) castes are only those who participated in the Divine Sacrifices (*yajñas*). Thus the caste system satisfied at once the necessities of the rituals of the Aryan immigrants, of the maintenance of racial purity, and of the preservation of social peace through a natural stratification of groups of a heterogeneous civilization embracing large indigenous Dravidian communities according to occupations, attainments and culture. Time and again in India's social history the boundaries of caste were extended so as to bring into the Indo-Aryan fold not merely the Dravidian peoples and aboriginal groups but also successive waves of foreign invaders and immigrants. The inherent principles of social accommodation and assimilation underlying the structure of castes were at no other epoch brought so powerfully into play as in the age following the large-scale Śaka and Hun invasions of Northern India from the beginning of this millennium to the rise of the Imperial Guptas.

In the vast crowded plains of India, connected by easy mountain routes with the steppes of Central and Western Asia, the political consequences of migration, war and conquest were largely nullified and the people early developed certain protective institutions; viz. the four-fold *varṇa* stratification, the village community and the joint family system. Such institutions and traditions were the great Indo-Aryan contributions to the problem of social integration through absorption, specialisation and ranking rather than through total mobilisation and subordination as are the procedures of several other civilizations. These constituted the frame-work safeguarding the traditional group freedoms and dharmas in the multi-group polity of India. The Huns, deflected Westward by the memorable victory of Skandagupta against them in India, destroyed under the leadership of Attila the Roman civilization (middle of the 5th century A. D.). A century later, the Ephthalite Hun leader, Mihiragula, the Indian Attila, reappeared in the Indian horizon, destroyed the civilization of Gandhara and the Punjab, and became the Kalkiraja of Jain tradition. But the Huns whom all empire-builders from the Guptas to the Palas sought to quell were, thanks to the catholic myths of social assimilation in the *Dharmaśāstras*, and the *Mahābhārata*, gradually absorbed as Kshatriya and Rajput

clans and castes into Hinduism. Even Mihiragula himself embraced Śaivism. Such was the spell of Indian religion on the outlandish, fierce barbarians, as the Mahābhārata described them. It is these which explain at once the rigidity and flexibility of Indian caste and the periodical crises and continuity of Indian civilization. Geographical and ecological also in their origin, and hence all-pervasive are the fundamental Indian doctrines of order and unity of life, immortality and karma which have permeated all forms of religion, mythology and literature in the country. All invaders and immigrants into India have come under the spell of these ancient doctrines. These ultimately developed as a result of the commingling of the Indo-Aryan, Munda-speaking Dravidian and foreign peoples into the theories of Pantheism and Pan-karma that were integrated and re-oriented by the ethical conception of the four-fold values of life (chaturvarga), functionally interrelated to one another—enjoyment (kama), wealth (artha), righteousness (dharma) and enlightenment (moksha). In the last and perhaps the most pregnant sloka of the Bhagavad Gītā, the epitome of Hindu wisdom, we read that whenever there is the realisation of the Real or Universal man (Nārāyana-Krishna) in Man (nara, Arjuna), and man actively participates (dhanur dharah) in the promotion of the Divine plan, there are prosperity, victory, culture and justice in the State. In the Battle of Kurukshetra that stood as the symbol and inspiration of the memorable battles in Indian history, victory is assured for the side that is favoured by Sri Krishna-Nārāyana and the divine energy of Dharma, and, from the metaphysical viewpoint, that combines the most strenuous and just but detached action with the loftiest intellectual and spiritual vision. The ranking of the four major values of life in which one fulfils the other—renunciation and passion, silence and activity, also is comprehensive enough for all kinds of peoples and all types of character and personality, and combines the principles of stability and change, order and adventure.

The Indian Myth of the Cycles of History

In India the same metaphysical opposites of stability and change, dissolution and creation weave the texture of her philosophy of history. History in Indian tradition is not the biography of heroes or representative men, but an ageless

process in which not men but the human species, not particular lives but Life cyclically grow, mature and decay. In India the circle symbolises completion and perfection. The Wheel with the movable centre is the symbol of continuing progress in the procession of time (the chakra of Vedic and Buddhist culture). Thus history, cosmic, human and personal, is envisioned as the cyclic oscillation of the Wheel. Every cycle of creation and destruction of the cosmos is called a Kalpa with a Progenitor (Brahmā) in each. One thousand Kalpas make a year of Brahmā and one thousand Brahmā years make his world-age or Yuga. The Yugas are four—Kṛta, Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali. Seventy-one four-fold Yugas make a Manu-interval (manvantara) with a Great Man (Manu) presiding over it and possessing its own Kings (Indra) and sages. The four Yugas, periods of human history, are associated with the waxing and waning of righteousness (Dharma) and the cyclic vicissitudes of human groups and institutions with their repercussion on human values and well-being. Indian mythology envisages endless cosmic cycles or Kalpas bearing in their bosom the process of human epochs or Yugas following each other in the infinitude of time. Thus does the ever-recurrent rhythm of the Wheel or chakra apply alike to the life and destiny of the individual, the history of mankind and the process of the cosmos. An unending series of Great Men, Creators and Kings of the earth, Brahmas and Indras reign, thrive and then pass away in their innumerable universes that come and go through countless cycles of creation, maturation, dissolution and reincarnation. Into this ageless cyclical process of the world organism India imports a moral and cultural purpose through the conception of emanation, fruition and destruction across the Kṛta, Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali ages of history (yugas), the moral order of Dharma, gradually lapsing from purity and perfection into disorganisation and conflict and then beginning another cycle.

From the viewpoint of social psychology, civilization has its periods of growth, maturation, stationariness and degeneration. Neither progress nor decline covers an indefinite period, and a real insight is gained into the historical process through the treatment of various cultural epochs in the light of a governing life-cycle of civilization. History does show recurrences in a long macro-cosmic vista, though these are neither absolute nor have

identical features. The cyclical approach to the course of history has found its adherents in the West from Polybius, Machiavelli and Vico to Spengler, Sorokin and Toynbee. It is noteworthy that the great philosopher of modern history Toynbee finds in the process of universal history the same cyclical rhythm of static and dynamic, of movement and poise and movement, as defined in the oscillations of Puruṣa and Prakṛti, Yān and Yang in the pregnant imagery of the Indian and Chinese cosmo-genic myths.

Indian historiography accepts the reality of the triumphs and disasters of history alike, and insists that we learn from both the glory and the defeat of Dharma and culture, viewed as a dynamic process rather than as a stationary state. This cyclical view of man's earthly destiny and Dharma has protected the Indian people against the extremes of optimism and pessimism. And indeed few people have such a long and remarkably continuous history of five millenia, have seen such ups and downs of the social order, and learnt so much in a yet living civilization from past glories and tragedies as foils for some larger good of the world organism. It is remarkable that both the Hindu and Christian Apocalyptic conception of the end of the social order was not an idea of damnation and catastrophe but of continuity and consummation of the Divine will and law—the irresistible perpetual rise of the Dharma-raja. Such is the tragic meliorism, leavened with social expectancy, of the Indian philosophy of history, born of the assimilation of several millenia of experience into the balance of human progression. Scant centuries cannot obviously provide the stuff out of which a true philosophy of history can emerge. This was stressed by Lord Acton who once remarked: "We can found no philosophy on the observation of four hundred years, excluding three thousand. It would be an imperfect and fallacious induction." A further limitation of the traditional approach to history arises from the fact that most ancient civilizations, including those of Egypt, Sumer, Crete, Persia, Greece and Rome, exist largely in monuments, epigraphs and historical documents. It is only when a civilization is not only ancient but at the same time living in the present with full vitality like the civilization of India, that its long-range balance of social and institutional forces can be discerned and revealed by true history.

The Unity of Indian Civilization

The nineteenth century European historians postulated that only 'nations' have a patria and a history. In India the Indo-Aryan traditions early led to the identification of patria, Dharma and history. India is not a 'nation' in the European usage of the term. But there is an Indian civilization in a sense in which there is no European civilization. This has been built up by the distinct Indo-Aryan institutions of caste, village community and joint family, the myths of Saṃsāra and Karma, and the Vedic Dharma and way of living. This unity of Indian civilization was derived from the fundamental plan of Vedic philosophy, religion and myth that set forth the metaphysical ideal of the Universal Man and the Universal Community as facets of the progressive movement of the human spirit. While in the other great civilization of Asia, the Chinese, the global conception was a vast benevolent peace and unity of the land, established by the world monarch, the Son of Heaven as vice-regent of deity, in India the global peace and unity were grounded on man's direct intuition of the Real and the Universal within himself, whence sprang the most expansive sentiments of inter-human communion and identity. The same unity was the inspiration among the nobility and warrior classes of India to establish kingdoms and empires. And very early in Vedic times the ideal of a Universal empire (Sārvabhauma) arose on the plains of the Ganges, probably influenced by the Assyro-Babylonians or the Dravidian peoples of the Indus Valley and modified by the Indo-Aryan conception of Dharma or righteousness being the real sovereign, the king as danda or the executive, supporting and enforcing Dharma with the assistance of the four orders of the realm. The nobility and warrior order is governed by the Arthaśāstra rather than by the Dharmaśāstra which holds its sway among the priestly order. The injunctions of politics are concrete, realistic, even opportunist and sharply contrasted with the absolute moral laws and regulations that define the Dharma of the Brahmans. Yet the Kṣatriya spirit is the spirit of justice, equity and forbearance and not the spirit of brute power of Macht Politics. The Mahābhārata observes: "The heavens are centred in the ethics of the State." Like many other countries India also had her outstanding conqueror-kings—Chandragupta

Maurya, Aśoka, Kaṇiṣka, Samudragupta, Harṣa, Yaśodharman, Devapāla, Rājendra Chola I, Krishnadeva Rāya, Shershah Sur, and Akbar. Invasions from Bactria and Irania that were really the pulsating ante-chambers of India were chronic and recurrent challenges to unification. From Gāndhāra and the Punjab, from the Ganges basin, western and eastern, and from Malwa and Gujarat, empires were built in successive epochs, the successive Raja Chakravartins welding peoples of different races, languages, traditions, and levels of culture into some kind of a loose political, but none the less effective, cultural unity.

In a sub-continent, broken up into many regions with wide variations in climate and natural resources, inhabited by diverse races and peoples and carved out into congeries of kingdoms, empires and republics, unity and solidarity are the most constant political aspirations in history as these are the ancient essential aims of religion, morals and the social order. No country in the world has ever through its metaphysics, religion, art and scheme of social gradation woven such a rich and enduring fabric of unity amidst such diversity which embraces not only men but all sentient creatures. Out of the welding together of the mass of Indian peoples with their various types, indigenous and exotic, in the Maurya, Gupta and Pala Empires arose the fundamental political principles of the loose union of semi-autonomous states under the king or kings and of the composite and secular culture state or Dharma-rājya. These represent the most constant elements in Indian history dovetailed into Indian empire-building and into socio-cultural integration and development.

The Primordial Social Plan of Vedic Thought

No doubt the moral and metaphysical conceptions of the Real or Cosmic Man and the Commonality of Mankind were the spiritual counterparts of the ever-continued, ever-reinforced processes of building up a United India, politically and socially. Empires recurrently fail, as force has its peculiar limitations for national unification in a country with such natural barriers, huge population and infinite social complexity and heterogeneity as India. Thus her civilization draws through the epochs more surely upon humanist myths—the political myths of the Kingdom of Universal Moral Law (Dharma-rājya) and the Universal Empire, the social myths of the Chaturvarṇa, Varṇa-śaṁkara and

Kaliyuga, the religious myths of the Avatāra, the Bodhisattva and the Compassionate Bhagavān and Śakti, the moral myths of Obligations and Sacrifices and the intellectual myth of the Triple Way of Living, of wisdom, action without involvement and worship (Jñāna, Karma, Bhakti). These have engendered common patterns of morality and ways of living among the principal regions of India from the great snow-clad mountains in the north to the southern ocean, and effected that solidarity of Indian society which blood and iron can achieve with but limited and temporary success. It is myth, metaphysics and religion and the forms and symbols of art in which these are significantly and powerfully revealed from epoch to epoch that have indeed governed the unity, integrity and vitality of Indian civilization.

The dominant characteristic of that civilization evolved through many political vicissitudes is the leavening of the general mass of the population by the grandiose myths of the intellectual elite whose different schools of thought all show a remarkable agreement as regards the unity and continuity of Life, Mind and Society in the macrocosm—the basic metaphysical assumption of Indian life and culture. Racially and socially, there is an upward movement of absorption and assimilation of lower and exotic groups at inferior levels of culture. Intellectually and spiritually, there is a downward movement of Dharma and dissemination of the traditional wisdom and social order of scholastic theory that governs every department of life and thought from morals and metaphysics to politics, aesthetics and erotics. It is from the primordial plan of Vedic philosophy that the whole of the social scheme and institutions of India indeed springs, although only as an application to a contingent realm. Toynbee speaks of the small creative minorities of civilizations carrying along with them by dint of charm the “uncreative mass”, the bulk of which are “men of like passions and of identical human nature with Primitive Man”. In India the social faculty of “mimesis” brought into play by the elite through redactions of the epics and Purāṇas and the various Dharma-śāstras in the early centuries of this millenium, and then by the great mass bhakti and vernacular movements, especially from the fourteenth to the eighteenth centuries, contributed towards a high average level of social intelligence, culture and spirituality among the

common people. All this tended to establish a profound unity among the people at both the social and metaphysical levels grounded in the spiritual affinity between the realm of the absolute and the realm of the contingent. The universal principles in pure scholastic mode have linked together human and cosmic life and destiny in India in a manner unique in the history of human civilization. Metaphysics, myth, art and ritual, all open a common gate through which the Indian man attains his dharma and moksha and enters his samsāra, that only as an inherent totality possesses value, even sanctity.

The Classical Traditions of the Imperial Guptas

The Golden Age of the Imperial Guptas saw a national renaissance in India. In the field of social and political myth-making, philosophy, literature and the fine arts, we encounter perfection of form, based upon a unity in which the detail is subordinated to the whole and the abstract, and a clarity of conception which springs from an ideal of truth and beauty. The Gupta Age saw a correspondence between the restraint, rationality and poise of its "classical" art and literature and the spirit of law and conformity in the social organisation. The norms of society, politics and religion, like those of the fine arts, reached "classical" simplicity, rationality and universality under the Gupta Empire and since then guided Indian life (from the fourth century onward). The succeeding epochs have accepted the Gupta tradition not merely in poetic, artistic and philosophical expression but also in social form, as "classical"—the natural product of a mature civilization in a privileged era, and again and again experienced a revival of creative adventures in every field of life by returning to that great heritage.

Urbanisation, trade and commerce, the rise of a rich merchant and professional class and racial admixture brought about a profound cultural transformation that began under the Indo-Bactrians and Kushans in the early centuries A.D. and continued through the five golden centuries of Gupta and post-Gupta renaissance. From the intellectual adventures and devotions of foreign convert groups, such as the Kushans, Indo-Bactrians, Śakas, Ābhiras and Huns assimilated into the caste system in the Kushan and Gupta eras of urbanisation and commerce, arose three catholic humanitarian movements that challenged the rigid

tenets and formalities of the older creeds: viz., first, Mahāyāna Buddhist culture, with its gospel of collective love and salvation that rose to the height of its fervour and missionary and leveling zeal in the "second holy land of Buddhism"; second, Bhāgavata culture, Śaiva and Vasudeva-Krishnaite; and third, Tāntrika culture, that were all equally proselytising and social egalitarian in their influences both in the country as well as in the Hindu colonies in Further India and the Indian Archipelago. Mahāyāna Buddhism did not introduce a new social order in India as did Christianity in Europe, since it was born out of the spiritual intimacy of Brahmanism and Buddhism and shared with Bhāgavatism similar humanistic tendencies.

The Indianisation of Middle and East Asia

Indian religions rose to their greatest impulsion and universality thrice, covering vast periods of Indian history. First, Mahāyāna Buddhism rose in the first centuries of the Christian era in cosmopolitan Gāndhāra, Kashmir and Udyāna and gradually spread from the Vankṣu (Oxus) and the Sītā (Tarim) to the Hwangho and across the Purvasāgara to the Indian Archipelago. The spread of Buddhism became the spearhead of a process of Indianisation of Middle Asia for a thousand years up to the rise of the kingdom of Ghazni. Second, Neo-Brahmanism of the classical Gupta age that started with the redactions of the epics, Purāṇas and Tantras and played a significant role in the colonial and cultural expansion of India in Dvīpāntara Bhārata—the extensive and less known south-eastern regions beyond the shores of India. Third, Tāntrikism that played a similar role in the Indianisation of South-east Asia under the aegis of the Pala Empire. On the whole, if we reckon India's southern expansion and adventures, from the earliest episode of the colonisation of Ceylon in the fifth century B.C. the movement of Indian colonisation in South-east Asia might be regarded as having stretched for about two thousand years till the very advent of Muslim Arabs in the East in the fifteenth century.

War, politics and commerce can explain neither the rise of the kingdoms of Khotan, Uigar and Turfan across the Pamir and Funan, Champa, Paupan, Sri Vijaya and Majapahit in the East, nor the fullest expression of the broad humanism and compassion of Indian Art at Borobodur, Prambanam, Angkor-vat,

Lun-huang or Lung-men beyond the frontiers of India. It is the impulsion of the myths and fine arts of Brahmanism, Mahāyāna Buddhism and Tāntrikism that migrated to the various Hindu colonies with the monk missionaries, scholars and merchant-devotees and from the various Indian universities that explain the adoption of the entire heritage of Indian culture by the peoples of Middle and East Asia in the course of a whole millenium. In a sense half of Asia lived according to the myths and traditional order of India. All over Asia the spirit of self-discipline, renunciation and wisdom of India evoked profound reverence.

Illumination in the Dark Ages

The history of Indian civilization has no dark and middle ages. Western European civilization was completely obliterated from the end of the fifth to the middle of the eleventh century by the barbarian invasions. India never experienced a debacle like the fall of the Roman Empire as the result of the invasion of the Huns, Goths and Vandals, with the advent of either the Yuechi, Śaka and Hun hordes or in the later centuries the Muslim Turko-Afghans. The strength and impulsion of Indian culture during the periods of Muslim invasion and conquest are abundantly evident in the continued struggle and independence of many Hindu kingdoms, the last and most powerful of them being Vijayanagar, which fell after as many as eight centuries since the Muslim occupation of Sind. Other countries in Asia and Europe succumbed easily and quickly to the unrelenting, advancing sword of Islam. The centuries of India's struggle with Islam saw the triumph of Indian art and culture in Sumatra, Java, Siam and Cambodia. In the Eastern colonies there was also witnessed a remarkable attempt at the development of composite cults and rituals in which Brahmanism, Mahāyāna Buddhism and Tāntrikism showed a fresh and vigorous synthesis, not met with in the Indian soil. The composite worship of Siva, Buddha and Vishnu or Brahmā, for instance, ran parallel with the cult of Trimurti in Gupta India but showed a maturer development in Java and Cambodia in the very century when Indian cities and temples were being razed to the ground by Sultan Mahmud's armies.

Several distinct contributions of Indian culture are discernible during about three centuries (from the thirteenth to the

fifteenth century) of struggle with the foreign Muslim rulers; first, the reinforcement of the ancient Maurya-Gupta-Pala idea of paramountcy associated with a loose central control and delegation of responsibility of administration to semi-independent states; second, the development of the idea of a composite, secular state under the Bahmani kings in the south, the Hussain Shahi and Sur dynasties in the east and Moghul Emperors from Akbar to Shah Jahan in the north; and third, the flowering of the Bhakti and Indian Sufi movements from the sixteenth century onwards that abandoned ritualism and dogma, admitted to their folds both Hindus and Muslims and high and low castes, and with an incredible liberty of religious doctrines and practices initiated new religious experiments for bringing about amity between the vast Hindu and Muslim populations.

The Major Renaissances in India

The famous historian Jacob Burckhardt observes: "A peculiarity of higher cultures is their susceptibility to renaissances. Either one and the same or a later people partially adopts a past culture into its own by a kind of hereditary right or by right of admiration. These renaissances are to be distinguished from the politico-religious restorations with which they nevertheless coincide here and there." There is no civilization in the world which has experienced so many renaissances as Indian civilization. The striking features of the major renaissances in India which sometimes have overlapped with political integrations and restorations may be briefly indicated. First, the intellectual and religious renaissance from the sixth century to the third century B.C. embodying the revolt against Vedic ritualism, priesthood and class stratification. This synchronised with a great spiritual ferment in the whole world from Greece to China, and culminated in the rise of the Krishna-Vāsudeva cult, Jainism and Buddhism in India and the spread of the universal Indian faith in Gāndhāra, Seistan and Chinese Turkestan under Aśoka. The Mauryan Empire gave its full support to the movement in religion, literature and art that originally sprang from the eastern republican states and kingdoms north of the Ganges. Second, the renaissance of Bhāgavatism and Mahāyāna Buddhism, accelerated by the cultural intercourse with the Perso-Hellenes in cosmopolitan Gāndhāra and Western India and the

devotion of converted foreign groups such as the Indo-Bactrians, Śakas and Kushans. This was responsible for the march of Buddhism across the Pamir under the Kushan Empire, so significant for the expansion of the "Sangha of the four directions" and the Indianisation of the entire Middle Asia. The Mahāyāna renaissance, born in the Kundalavana monastery in Kashmir, was in fact the main inspiration of the unique historic phenomenon of the Indianisation of Asia extending from Gāndhāra to Japan, which illumined the course of Asian history for a whole millennium from the first century A.D. to one thousand A.D. Such Indianisation was accelerated by the continuous migration and settlement for about two millenia of Indian monk-scholars and missionaries in other lands and the influx of pilgrims and scholars from other countries into the home-land of Buddhism and Brahmanism. The cultural hegemony of India over the rest of Asia in the Buddhist middle ages was widely embodied in the Mahāyāna ideal of Trailokya-vijaya—the spiritual conquest of the three worlds. Third, the neo-Brahmanical renaissance of art, literature and culture that reached its pinnacle of glory with the consolidation of the Gupta Empire and lasted for full five centuries. It provided also the impetus for the colonisation of Dvīpāntara Bhārata that came under the suzerainty of the Guptas. Here again both the restoration of an Indian Empire and the adoption of Śaivism, Vaiṣṇavism and Buddhism by the foreigners such as the Śakas, Huns and Ābhiras who were admitted into the wide frame of Indian culture, none the less due to their unbounded sense of admiration, were the main-springs of the renaissance. The Empires of Harsha Śīlāditya and Gurjara-Pratihāras—bulwarks against foreign invasions—continued the same cultural renaissance. Fourth, the Tāntrika renaissance which followed the Gupta-Brahmanical revival and its assimilation of Mahāyāna, Vajrayāna and Sahajayāna Buddhism in the next four or five centuries. Just as Mahāyāna Buddhism ushered in the golden age of Buddhist art, so did Tāntrika syncretism initiate the golden age of Brahmanical art both in India and in the Hindu colonies of the Pacific. Fifth, the later Buddhist Tāntrika renaissance under the Pala and Sena Empires from the eighth to the eleventh century A.D. which played a vital part in the spread of Indian Tāntrikism, art and culture in Nepal, Tibet and Brahmadesa comprising a large part of south-east Asia.

The course of the later renaissances was equally marked by a rich and magnificent harvest. The Pallava, the Chalukya and the Chola renaissances, having contributed splendidly to the development of temple architecture and sculpture in South India, were largely responsible for directing the course of Indian expansion in the Pacific. Seventh, the renaissance of literature and the fine arts under the Empire of Vijayanagar which left its indelible impress upon the tastes, manners and qualities of the people of Karnataka and the neighbourhood. Eighth, the religious renaissance and the social egalitarian and vernacular movements that began with Rāmānanda and spread from Maharashtra to Kamarupa from the fourteenth to the eighteenth century A.D. This movement was characterised by spontaneity, vitality and eclecticism, and its extension had little to do with the patronage of the state but was based on the faith and idealism of the common people. It was therefore the people's renaissance, the people from Gujarat to Orissa having one mind, one vision and one language of the spirit. The people's renaissance coincided with at least three movements of political restoration. In Rajputana the political integration and revival began in the fifteenth century with several Rajput Chiefs such as those of Sisodia and Rathor consolidating their power in autonomous principalities, and the next century witnessed a glorious renaissance of Rajasthan painting and sculpture that also influenced the rise and development of the Himachala folk school of painting in the Punjab states. In Maharashtra the religious renaissance represented by the Bhakti movement from Jnanadeva to Tukaram merged in the national political restoration under Sivaji and his successors in the seventeenth century, and led to the establishment of a mighty empire that might have prevented British conquest but for a series of errors, accidents and misfortunes. The period of Maratha imperialism in the eighteenth century was associated with a splendid literary and cultural revival. In the Bengal delta, taking advantage of the difficulty of access due to the network of rivers, channels and lagoons and the strength and efficiency of the river flotilla, Musa Khan and the twelve Bārabhuiyas of Bengal, including Kedar Rāi of Śrīpur, Pratāpāditya of Jessore and Rāmachandra of Bakla carved out independent territories of their own and carried on the last heroic battle of independence against the Moghul

Empire, with fluctuating fortunes which could not however assume the character of a concerted resistance. In the regime of the Barabhuiyas, who were looked upon as heroes and national leaders of the people, folk-song and ballads sung from mouth to mouth bear ample testimony to the creative spirit of the people in this significant epoch of Bengal. Ninth, the renaissance in literature, painting, architecture and handicraft under the Moghul Emperors. This was the outcome of the Moghul patronage of Arabic, Persian and Sanskrit scholars, the mingling of Persian and Indian art elements and traditions among Persian and Hindu artists in the imperial and provincial courts and the encouragement of education through the establishment of numerous Madrasas, Khanqahs and Maktabas. Moghul painting, music, architecture and crafts and Indo-Persian and Hindi literature found their golden ages in the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries A.D. And tenth, the nineteenth century cultural renaissance that began in Bengal, with Rammohan Roy as its great harbinger and pioneer, as India's spontaneous and powerful reaction to the Western challenge to her ideals and institutions. This continues to fashion the development of India and her culture to this day. India is such a vast country that minor and subsidiary renaissances were also often met with under independent kingdoms such as Kashmir, Gujarat, Malwa, Rajputana, Bundelkhand, Bengal and the triple states of the South. Mention may be made of other renaissances that sprang from philosophical and religious movements and were confined to particular regions.

The Common Trends of the Indian Renaissances

Renaissances reflect the character and temper of a particular civilization. In India the renaissances were characterised by two common trends: politically, the objective was the achievement of unity amidst the multiplicity of races, languages, customs and manners of the different states and regions into which the country was divided; culturally and metaphysically, the objective was the identification of the moral and spiritual perfection of the individual with the Dharma of culture, of groups and of the state. Each group, caste or profession, the law-givers, the priests, the artisans, the agriculturists and above all the kings and the order of Kshatriyas conformed to the rule

of its Dharma. India with her semi-autonomous families, castes, village communities, professions and brotherhoods regulated by their dharmas and customs, as interpreted from time to time by the Dharmaśāstras, was one of the least governed countries in the world. Next to the Vedas, the Angas, the Smṛtis and the Purāṇas, the customs (dharma) of regions, caste-groups and families were authoritative and could not be disregarded. The scholastic mode of thought in India identifies the moral responsibility of the individual neither with the glory of the state nor with the privilege and power of social groups or classes but with the unlimited extension of the human community. The individual's self-perfection and the brotherhood of mankind are seen as facets of the same movement of the human spirit. Social and economic equality and the fraternity of mankind did not exist in India on the plane of merely rational arguments nor were used for specious exploitation of the unprivileged classes. Dharmarājya is theoretically, therefore, universal as the salvation of the individual is collective. The pathway to mukti and politico-cultural integration becomes the same. The cultural aim dominated the renaissances because, unlike the course of European development, culture or dharma was overwhelmingly stronger in India than the political organisation, and the people under the scholastic discipline were not ruled by historical occurrences but themselves ruled the world as metaphysicians—Yājñavalkya, Sri Krishna, Mahāvira, Buddha, Vasubandhu, Nāgārjuna, Gorakhnāth, Śaṅkara, Rāmānuja and Rāmānanda. The state was in fact eclipsed by the high moral and metaphysical purpose and enthusiasm of the people who were much more concerned with philosophical and religious movements initiating renaissances than with even historical events and changing fortunes of the state. Buddha's Dharmachakra-pravartana was perhaps a greater event than the foundation of the Mauryan Empire, Śaṅkara's exposition of the Vedānta-Sūtras than the militant incursion of the Muslims, and Chaitanya's sankirtana procession from Navadvīpa to Vṛndāvana and from Puri to Pandharpur than the struggle for independence of the Bengal Bārabhuiyas against the Moghul Viceroys.

Both culture and state in India were subjected through the ages of renaissances to the most powerful trends of thought, of metaphysical abstraction and the scholastic formulation of the

common myths, norms and traditions of the social order. And the unity and solidarity of Indian civilization that were cemented by myths and the traditional social order have been far more deep-seated than what can be achieved by nationalism, militarism and racialism. Renaissances were far less unsettling in India than in the West, because they were inheritors of the entire myths and traditions of the country for all times, and also because of the relative freedom of her social life and culture from the fetters of an all-pervasive state and feudalistic authority of the different social orders or estates which were all regulated by certain common norms and traditions. Each renaissance was the harbinger of a new universalism for people and culture, and of a fresh triumph of the spirit of man. It was accordingly a fresh binder of the people calling them to renew their possession of the magnificent intellectual and social legacy for the attainment of the perfection of the individual and of the true spirit of universal humanity.

There is no break in the continuity of Indian history between the ancient and medieval periods. India in all historical periods always lived according to certain norms and traditions of society and culture that were formulated in the holy land of the Ganges and systematized and clarified under the Imperial Guptas and again in the short-lived Moghul Empire of the tolerant Akbar, Jehangir and Shahjahan. India's scholasticism, religion and dharma-śāstra alike supported a traditional order in which community and community, caste and caste, man and man could live without antagonism and chaos. These are also surely the major problems of present-day politics in India. The Indian historian's myth-making, norm and standard of judgment must find the way to their solution by making past values, traditions and events significant for the present generation. Indian civilization, after the British rule for a century and a half with its stress on liberty, equality and sovereignty of the people, is today renewing its traditions on the modern spiral. Toynbee remarks: "the geneses of all civilizations could be described in the phrase of General Smuts—'Mankind is once more on the move'." Let India make her fresh start with a proper understanding of the past and the effect of traditions within the social sphere of the individual.

Vast political and social transformations implying a wholesale substitution of institutions and traditions have been afoot as a result of the British occupation and impact of Western intellectual and social movements—secularism, democracy and socialism. India can rebuild her society and play her due role in world civilization neither by bolstering up archaic social forms nor by indiscriminately borrowing Western social habits, institutions and procedures, but by adapting the accumulated force of environment, race and tradition to the spirit of the age. The zeitgeist is the unity and balance of man both within himself and his group and culture—the world community; this is also the abiding and ever-recurrent refrain of the drama of Indian history. In the midst of the world-wide mechanisation and standardisation and encroachment upon the essential and irrepressible liberties of the human person, India's ancient group and co-operative spirit, historic regionalism and decentralisation in her traditional multi-group polity and the cultured pattern of shared living and service clearly show the way to the next stage in her historical evolution. Thus may the Indian state, steering clear between regimentation and exaggerated individualism, and between power-politics and inept internationalism, reflect the universal social values of the individual, and become saturated with a sense of collectivist humanist mission and purpose. India's most glorious and privileged epochs and movements in the past were dominated by universalist cultural aims; and a revival of this historic spirit may enable her to enrich the common world pool of values and traditions with those universalist norms and standards that are specially needed by this war-torn age, and that indeed measure the quality of a country's civilization.

The Age of Coercion and War

The atomic age of mankind, now preparing itself for the most devastating global war that may destroy the entire human species, has inherited the suspicion, hatred and bitterness of the two European world-wars of this century. These were preceded by the nationalist wars of the nineteenth century, the French revolutionary wars at the close of the eighteenth century, the wars of religion from the middle of the sixteenth to the middle of the seventeenth century and the crusades of the eleventh century, all

inter-linked with one another in the bloody pageant of the European peoples, which have stained their mighty achievements thick with blood in the various continents. Man fights wars and revolutions when his numbers outrun resources in unfavourable and limited territories and corridors of his migration or when traditions and dogmas obtain an exaggerated emphasis and brook no deviation nor heresy. The fanatical zeal for the rescue of the Holy Sepulchre, the Catholic and Protestant dogmas, the doctrine of the Divine right of kings, the French Revolutionary creed of egalitarianism, Nationalism, Fascism and Nazism—all represent lop-sided emphasises that recurrently brought about armed conflicts or needed bloody revolutions for their liquidation. The fixed and intolerant ideologies of Capitalism, Communism and thinly veiled Racism today divide whole peoples and continents leading them to mutual extermination. Francisco Romero observed: "Occidentals are uncompromising and intolerant because they do not for a moment doubt that there exists one true doctrine and many wrong ones. The Orient, save for transitory exceptions, has been tolerant. The faithful of Oriental creeds, for example, are partial to religious congresses, an idea impossible to occur to Europeans." Mankind is yet barbaric in its resolution of ideological conflicts by violence, and, in this age of improved cultural intercourse and technological and economic unification of the globe, deflected from the main direction of history by the pre-occupation with and intolerance of specialised traditions and dogmas. It is not through wasteful outbursts of coercion and conflict but through the amplification of the ancient Socratic method, the dialectical reconciliation of thesis and anti-thesis, of opposite and contradictory myths, traditions and modes of thought in a higher synthesis in both the intellectual field and the field of constructive social experiments that history can regain both its momentum and path of advance, releasing hundreds of millions of men from allegiance to opposing dogmas, moralities and social systems now driving them into armed camps in the different continents.

Mankind—the Theme and Final Entity of History

Historical knowledge forms the essential preliminary to such a global dialectical resolution of ideological conflicts by fostering mutual understanding and appreciation of goals, values and norms

and of the alternative social possibilities—a global confluence of historic traditions and cultures. Montesquieu, Vico, Herder, Ranke and Hegel, all stressed the manifold, colourful variety of cultural values and expressions of different peoples met with in the broad movement of history. Sorokin, Spengler and Pareto have in recent years brought to a focus the significance of myths, traditions and values in human history very different from those that have shaped Western civilization. The modern crisis of Western civilization, whose myths and values provided the material for the intellectual self-complacency and naive glorification of Europe of Gibbon, Macaulay, Seignobos and Bryce in the nineteenth century and the pessimism and exaggerated emphasis of class predatoriness of Nordau, Bakunin and Marxist historians of this century, especially calls for an understanding of the myths and values of the most enduring civilizations in human history. Successful travel and exploration in space-times—in the history of cultures—are much facilitated by concentrating attention to the permanent mile-stones in the march of mankind which besides appeal to universal human nature and experience. Spengler takes pains to show how the totality of a civilization comprising its social, economic, aesthetic and religious values and aspirations integrated together into a harmonious whole is so unique and elusive that it cannot be easily understood except by a person born into it. But the diversities of cultural patterns also reveal the universally and rationally human elements in all cultures. The march of history records, on the whole, entire humanity, profiting from the diffusion and inter-penetration of different cultural values and traditions. Thus the proper subject-matter of all histories is supra-national, universal humanity with its concepts and trends conceived only in reference to the common vicissitudes of humanity and in subordination to its total march. It is only the notion of universal humanity that can furnish the criteria of evaluation of the qualities and attributes of particular nations and cultures and their specific trends of growth and specialisation and truly define such concepts as those of aggressive chauvinism and imperialism or national balance and sense of proportion.

Every history builds up event by event, age by age, “the unity of the whole”, comprising the myths, traditions and norms of mankind, the final entity in human history. “The universe

including the earth, heaven and neither world, is our country." "Mankind is our kind." "The creative act in history is directed inwards the goal of world-maintenance, unity and progress" (loka jātra, loka saṁgraha, loka siddhi), mentions the Mahābhārata. "Man's pattern of individual conduct should be so shaped as to obtain universal acceptance and validity" is the teaching of the Bhagavad Gītā. These are ancient Indian postulates. Through the divergent and even contradictory lines of development of different human cultures in different regions we find an increased commonness of patterns of thought, values and faith in the structural order of mankind. We find also individual cultures rising to their highest when plasticity, freedom and universality are at their summit. Both trends contribute not towards "tribe" nationalism but towards a unified world society. Brahmanical Vedāntism, Mahāyāna Buddhism, Stoicism, Christianity, Enlightenment, Scientific Humanitarianism and Socialism have contributed in great measure in different epochs of history to reinforce the spirit of universality. There is a sense of imperativeness of direction in history, corresponding to the development from the seed to the flower, about the maturation from specific culture to world culture as the destiny of the human species. Yet at no epoch in human history has mankind been so mightily challenged by what Paul Tillich calls the Demonic in history due to the lusts and fears of irrational humanity.

One World and the Philosophy of History

The task of the twentieth century is the building up of a single world-culture which is fatefully pressing upon us as the *sine qua non* of human survival. Universal history rightly judges a nation or age according to its contribution to the common pool of cultural values and traditions of humanity. That contribution it can make not through exaggerated, single-tracked specialisation in a set of traditions, dogmatism or obsession, but through forbearance, toleration and mutual give-and-take of cultural values and ways of living. This impulsion can come only through the moral and religious initiative of individuals, saturated with a sense of metaphysical values, who from the central warmth of the quickened, enlarged cosmic self can assure the peace, solidarity and communion of mankind. It is

they who can impregnate all institutions including the state with a sense of moral mission and cultural responsibility. False ideologies that embody one-sided truths and partial values cause tensions. These can be corrected only by individuals who can integrate Truth with Goodness, Justice and Beauty, the universal supreme values with the intellectual concepts and doctrines. Thus can they attain and disseminate the vision, experience and loyalty of one world both in worship and social action. The intellectual and moral development of mankind similarly depends upon the integration of separate intellectual, aesthetic and moral traditions of different peoples into a single common world-pool of Truth, Goodness and Righteousness as both personal and cosmic imperatives. What Edmund Burke spoke of the unity of society is truer of the unity of world society: "It is to be looked on with reverence. It is a partnership in all sciences, a partnership in all art, a partnership in every virtue, and in all perfection. As the ends of such a partnership cannot be detained in any generation, it becomes a partnership not only between those who are living, but between those who are living, those who are dead and those who are to be born." Religion and state may be separate with their independent spheres of social action, but ethical religion has to play an increasing role not merely in developing the modern concept of the welfare or service state and superseding power-politics by goodness politics but also in bringing its warmth and devotion to universal righteousness and the community of mankind.

The modern philosophy of history governed by the Christian conception of humanity's march to the Day of Judgment, the nineteenth century evolutionary doctrine of Progress as a universal law and the Marxist notion of mankind's inevitable dialectical march towards the classless society through class struggle breeds a sense of cultural necessity as irrevocable as destiny itself. The conception of an inner unalterable certainty, driving peoples and their leaders blindly on by the surge of events as we find, for instance, in Spengler's fate-laden logic of history or in the Marxist dialectical formula of human development may be appropriate to the great crisis of modern Western civilization, but is entirely incompatible with the creative urge and expression of the greater part of mankind. The twentieth century conception of Progress must change from utopianism and

pessimism to meliorism that will reject both facile optimism and incurable defeatism and stress hopeful striving. Mankind's goal of one world, with its interknit fortunes of prosperity and misery, peace and war for the various nations, can be reached only by the conscious harnessing by individual and nation of cultural and spiritual traditions and values for guiding and democratising, and hence deepening and accelerating the movement of world security, liberty and justice. Mankind's historic continuity is governed as much by man belonging to a country, race or class shedding his mutable aspects, his narrow images of himself in his opinions, beliefs and faiths as by the world consciously striving towards a moral and spiritual unity through the synthesis of various cultural traditions and values and their fruitful application in global methods of co-operation. The philosophy of history finds mankind's mile-stones of advance across the dark, sanguinary roads of the past marked not by dogmatism and absolutism, fanaticism and utopianism that come to possess peoples, drive them to violence and fade away in history, but by cultural syncretism, moral and religious humanism and the rising stature of the free human personality. This truth of history is nowhere expressed more eloquently than in the Indian epic, the Mahābhārata, written for the clarification of India's cultural values and norms in a period of unprecedented social turmoil and acute rivalry of opinions and faiths like the one we are facing in the present juncture:

"Logical argument is inconclusive; the Vedas are dissimilar;
There is no sage whose doctrines can be taken as

authoritative.

The verities of Dharma lie hidden in the inaccessible

recesses of the soul;

The traditions followed by the many show the true way."

BOOK I
ANCIENT AND CLASSICAL TRADITIONS

PART I

THE PATTERN OF INDIAN CIVILIZATION

CHAPTER I

THE CULTURAL INTERPRETATION OF INDIAN HISTORY

Indian Civilization, a Story of Human Values

The establishment of the Republic of India on the 26th January 1950, two centuries after the commencement of British hegemony, marks the beginning of a new phase of development of Indian civilization, which after an unprecedented ancient course, now glorious, now chequered, is once again on the march. At such a period it is necessary to review the qualities and trends of Indian civilization, the dominant spiritual, aesthetic and social values that underlie its past achievements and explain its endurance and persistent vitality. The cultural and institutional heritage of India is not a fortune to boast of and dissipate, but a precious trust to be preserved and enriched for the future. Only on the basis of a right understanding how her civilization was shaped and developed, and of an adequate appreciation how the values of life were scaled and reoriented through the five thousand years of her history can we face the future with determination, hope and courage.

Indian civilization is largely a history of human values, of the development of philosophies, religions, arts and ways of collective living. India became political minded only when she was threatened with foreign invasions and conquests. Maurya, Gupta, Puṣyabhūti, Gurjara-Pratihāra and Pāla imperialisms were all responses to foreign irruptions and impacts. From the Maurya to Moghul times, kingdoms and empires usually grew up in the rich and populous Middle India (Madhyadeśa), the ancient principal seat of Indian civilization, with the Ganges-Jamuna corridor and the plateau of Malwa as bastions of

resistance against invaders. In the south, the Āndhra, Pallava, Chālukya, Chola and Vijayanagar empires were maritime ones; and the Marathas failed to establish an enduring empire largely because of the neglect of the navy. All these Indian empires, although born in the crucible of aggressions, foreign or internal, never remained altogether military, but made some unique contributions to India's endless story of the development of religions, philosophies, myths and arts that have survived the vicissitudes of politics. Dharmavijaya had its imperial exponents besides Aśoka the Righteous, as for instance, the Imperial Guptas, Vardhanas and Pālas with their programmes of 'world conquest' (trailokyavijaya).

Indian history has been usually treated from the political angle. In this sub-continent where have lived together many peoples and cultures with a striking measure of local and functional self-government, a merely political or economic interpretation of history becomes inadequate. The dense population of the Indus and Ganges basins to which the Greek writers bear testimony as early as the Maurya epoch has prevented the full impact of foreign conquest and occupation, and promoted the assimilation of the various race and culture elements. A decentralised polity is also affected far less by political events than by movements in religion, ideology and culture. An Indian view must regard history as *multi-dimensional*—an integration of the trends of philosophy, religion, art and social development reinforced, of course, by those of politics, war and peace.

India's Cultural Suzerainty over Half of Asia

A narrow, lop-sided, political view of Indian development has suffered all the more due to political prejudice that has blinded many European scholars to the gifts of India to world culture. The history of a country which has given to one-half of humanity in Asia her ethics, religion and metaphysics cannot be authentic if it remains indifferent towards the complex intellectual and religious currents and cross-currents.

There are, indeed, few countries in the world like India whose history is a history of philosophical traditions and movements and dialectical arguments in metaphysics and religion that have also influenced other lands. The state was in fact cast into the shade by people who cared much more for their

philosophies, patterns of worship, and standards of morality, than for historical events. India's holy books that have shaped Asian cultures comprise a good number. Those that were carried to Central Asia and China include the Brahmanical Vedas, Āgamas and Rāmāyaṇa and the Buddhistic Tripīṭaka, Saddharma-puṇḍarīka, Madhyamikā Vṛtti, Lalitavistāra, Buddha Charita, Prajñā-pāramitā, Śraddhotpāda, Aśokāvadāna, Abhidharmakosha and Sūtrālamkāra; while the Mahābhārata, the Rāmāyaṇa, Jātakas, Milinda Pañha, Lalitavistāra, Manusmṛti, Purāṇas, Āgamas and Tantras went to Ceylon, Further India and Indonesia, as attested by many versions and representations in art. The apathy and misunderstanding, if not positive distaste, of many Western Indologists have extended also to the realm of art. Like the Epics and Sūtras, Purāṇas, Āgamas and Tantras, Indian statues, bronzes and paintings, carried by generations of Indian and foreign monk-pilgrims, had been the chief vehicles of dissemination of India's culture in Central Asia, China, Tibet, Nepal, Further India and Japan. Beyond the specific geographical boundaries of India, Indian civilization built up an ideological Greater India from Gāndhāra, Kāpiśa, Khotan (Kamna), Kashgar, Uch-Turfan (Bharuka), Kuchi and Karashahr (Agnideśa) to Simhala, Burma (Śrikṣetra), Malaya (Malayadvīpa), Siam (Dvāravati), Cambodia (Kambuja), Annam (Champā), Sumatra (Suvarṇadvīpa), Java (Yavadvīpa) and Borneo (Varuṇadvīpa).

The Ideal Frontiers of India

The national epic of India, the Mahābhārata, as well as the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, the saga of the Gupta age, indeed, envisioned a considerable part of the Asian mainland designated as Jambūdvīpa as directly under the cultural suzerainty of India. But Indian civilization had crossed the Pamir centuries earlier, and Mauryan institutions had transplanted themselves in Chinese Turkestan even in the pre-Buddhist period. F. W. Thomas refers to a certain number of Greek terms in the Shan Shan inscriptions, which might have been brought from the Indian side, besides the division of the country into Sima, Śata and Sahasra (hundreds and thousands of villages) as in India, and the Maurya ornate, official and epistolar style along with such words as lekha (letter), lekha-hāraka (letter-carrier) and pothī (book). The name of the town mayor (nāgaraka) also came from contemporary Indian

cities along with monasteries, nunneries and temples which were attributed to the "Āryas". Thus bits of India were established beyond the mountains under the regime of the Imperial Mauryas. The entire trans-Indus borderland of India from Kandahar to Seistan had indeed been known in the two centuries before and after Christ as "White India", and remained more Indian than Iranian until the Muslim subjugation. The native population in Middle Asia comprised a strong Indian element; while Indian culture and Indian scripts, Kharoshthī and Brāhmī, were prevalent in the Tarim basin in Khotan, Karia, Nia, Kashgar, Kuchi and Karashahr with their Buddhist vihāras as flourishing as those of India in the Gupta age and after. Fa Hien who visited Shan Shan in 400 A.D. observes:—"From this point (Lob Region) travelling westwards the nations that one passes through are all similar in this respect (i.e. in the practice of the religion of India), and all those who have left the family (i.e. monks and novices) study Indian books and the Indian spoken language (Sanskrit)."

Through several centuries, when India controlled the Central Asian land-routes and the Eastern sea-routes, Indian culture, religion and trade continued to reach far beyond the limits of India. The English rulers have bequeathed to us, obviously, a cramped, restricted geographical conception of India; and we have lost at present even that lively appreciation of the significance of the "scientific" frontiers of India in Gāndhāra and Kashmir which we come across, for instance, in the Viṣṇu Purāṇa, the sacred legend of Gupta imperialism. This refers to the Darvikā valley leading over the Khyber Pass and Kashmir as Indian territory.

Kālidāsa, the national poet of the Gupta age, in his famous description of Raghu's digvijaya, reminiscent of the conquests of Samudragupta and Chandragupta II Vikramāditya, also envisioned the ideal frontiers of India extending up to the Vankṣu (Oxus) and the Lauhitya (Brahmaputra), and including Bactria (Bāhlika), Badakshan, Afghanistan (Kamboja, Gāndhāra), Ladakh, the Tibeto-Himalayan region, Nepal, Bhutan and Assam (Prāgyotiṣa). Mention may be made here of Samudragupta's diplomatic relations with the suzerain of Balkh and Gāndhāra, his reception of an embassy and gifts from Meghavarman of Ceylon coupled with a request that he might be permitted to build a monastery

at Bodh-Gaya, for Ceylonese pilgrims, and of "the conquest of Vāhlikas after crossing in warfare the seven mouths of the river Sindhu" by the Emperor Chandra (identified by some scholars with Chandragupta II) of the Meherauli iron pillar epigraph. With Kālidāsa and the authors of the Purāṇas the northern and north-western boundary of India was represented by "the Himalaya, the lord of the mountains, spanning the wide land from the Eastern to the Western ocean", the Hindukush, the Karakoram, and the Iranian plateau with the Kirthar and the Sulaiman ranges, forming parts of the six-fold Varṣa Parvata (Himavān, Hemakūṭa, Niṣadha, Nīla, Śveta and Śrngavān), which thus "entered" (avagāhya) into both the Bay of Bengal and the Arabian Sea. The Maurya and Gupta Empires which were the spear-heads of national renaissance knew the importance of defending the "natural" frontiers (pratyanta) and appointed Wardens of the Marches. Thus cultural nationalism was associated with a natural geographical and political unfolding of India under the Imperial Mauryas and Guptas.

The Identification of Bharata and Culture

The impact of religion upon cultural nationalism in India through the ages has also been underrated. For instance, it was the neo-Brahmanism which under the Śuṅgas and the Kāṇvas, the Bhāraśivas and the Vākātakas early initiated the renaissance in religion, metaphysics, literature and art that focussed national resistance, first against the Yavanas and Kushans and then against the Śakas, Huns, Ābhiras and other foreigners under the Imperial Guptas; in the Pāla Empire the Vajrayāna and Sahajayāna played an important role in the political and cultural expansion of India in the South-east; in the earlier ages the Hinayāna under Aśoka and the new dispensation of the Mahāyāna under the Kushan Empire were responsible for an outward cultural drive across the Himalayas and the seas.

The fact of the matter is that since the spacious times of Gupta imperialism, the Mahābhārata, the Purāṇas and the Bṛhat Saṁhitā led to an identification of land and culture; while both Mahāyāna Buddhism in the north-west and Bhāgavatism in Middle India favoured the conversion of foreign peoples and their social assimilation. The Indian legists supported the absorption of foreigners by the definition and nomenclature of

fresh Kshatriyas and Śūdras through the fiction of genesis and proliferation of "mixed" castes by interbreeding (śamkara). The divine society of the Vedic pattern was of course sullied and weakened by the recognition of mixed castes comprising the foreigners. But the piety and devotion which Bhāgavatism and Mahāyāna Buddhism evoked fortified the Indian people against exotic influences. The spread of Bhāgavatism as the pre-eminent religion of the whole of India saw also the compilation of many new Smṛtis in consonance with the social conditions. Culture came to be regarded as a more potent binder than race; and Indian nationalism, even when provoked by the oppression of foreign rulers and social substitution, was hardly sullied by any racialism as in Europe.

The Assimilation of Foreigners

The Purāṇas and Epics, Kāvya and Praśastis, rituals and pilgrimages not merely fostered a sense of cultural and political unity of Bhārata but also embraced foreigners within the Indian scheme of life. In a significant passage the Mahābhārata, Śānti-parva, enjoins Vedic duties and rites for the Yādavas, Kirātas, Gāndhāras, Tushāras and Pahlavas residing in the dominions of Aryan kings so as to facilitate their absorption into the Brahmanic culture. Patañjali speaks of the Yavanas and Śakas as Śūdras but relegates them outside Āryāvarta; while Manu looks upon the former as degraded Kshatriyas who had become Śūdras. The Śakas also came to be designated as Kshatriyas from as early as the first century B.C. The Śakas and the Yavanas (i.e. the Persians from the early centuries of the Christian era) became Hinduised and were fond of assuming Sanskrit names. The various Purāṇas and Smṛtis also encouraged the process of social absorption with greater or less liberality according to the age and social milieu. The Vāyu Purāṇa which is generally regarded as the oldest of the extant Purāṇas and was compiled between the fifth century B.C. and the fifth century A.D. makes the Śūdra and the Ājīva (artisan group) the offspring of extra-Varṇa connection, and yet the social importance of the Śūdra is well recognised. The Śūdras, it is mentioned, number twice as many as the Brahmans in the urban population and after the accession of the Śūdra Prince Mahāpadma (referring to the first Nanda) "all kings are Śūdras." (Vāyu Purāṇa, 93, 66.) The

Śūdras, along with the Vaiśyas and the women are enjoined to listen to the recital of the legend of Dakṣa-Śiva conflict from the Brahmans for winning a place in the Rudra heaven. In India the real sources of Dharma were the Śrutis and Smṛtis, the two eyes of the Brahman legists, as was aptly observed by Bṛhaspati, society being ruled with the maturity of Indian civilization less by the Vedas and more by the Smṛtis representing traditions and conventions (samayāchāra). The latter took precedence over the Śrutis and enormously multiplied especially from 400 A.D. to 1000 A.D., their number according to Nilakaṇṭha being 97. Where opinion differed, what was reasonable was to be accepted according to Vyāsa, or the majority view should prevail according to Gobhila, or again both courses were permissible according to Devanabhaṭṭa. It was this flexibility that led to the overruling of the Vedic injunctions from time to time as the social situation demanded. This was strengthened by the doctrine that the Smṛtis differed in authority from age to age: Manu was the authority for the Kṛta age, Gautama for the Tretā, Śaṅkha-Likhita for the Dvāpara and Parāśara for the Kali. Medhātithi, the commentator of Manu, observed that it was futile to present a complete list of the authoritative Smṛtis, for in future new Smṛtis will be composed and will command authority on their own merits. The compilation of about a hundred Smṛtis and the elucidation of the early authoritative works were stimulated by the influx of foreign peoples from age to age and the need of their assimilation into the social organisation. Thus society had constantly to give recognition to new social conventions and practices and modify old ones. The most striking instance of this is the compilation of the Devala Smṛti that addressed itself to the urgent problem of reconversion of the Hindus converted under duress to Islam. Neither Manu nor Gautama nor Parāśara had dealt with the issues brought to the fore by the conquest and proselytising activities of the Muslims. The Devala Smṛti established new principles and practices in respect of the converted Hindus including abducted and pregnant women. The supremacy of the Smṛtis was largely due to their adaptation to the spirit and temper of new times and to the identification of the land with the culture and Dharma rather than with race or any elite class. The Smṛtis were indeed invaluable implements of Indian culture providing a

canonical sanction to its ever-renewed process of absorption of both congeries of foreign stocks and races and primitive ethnic groups outside the pale of Hindu society.

Many were the theories and fictions of miscegenation (*varṇa-śaṁkara*), of non-observance of the social code in crises (*āpad-dharma*) and of the Iron Age (*Kaliyuga*), which the *Purāṇas* and the *Dharmaśāstras* elaborated in order to facilitate the compromise between adherence to the ancient metaphysical scheme of the four *varṇas* according to culture, learning and character, and the admittance into the Brahmanical society of the *Mlechchas* or foreigners and the semi-Hinduised artisan and aboriginal groups. The identification of *jāti* and *varṇa* and emphasis of the principles of birth and heredity for the upper castes were themselves the indirect results of the entry of exotic elements, aided by the *Smṛti* fiction of *śaṁkara* or intermingling of *varṇas* to which was attributed the origin of numerous "mixed" castes in the social order. The Kushan and Gupta ages, which saw a profound change in the social composition, advent of foreign hordes on a vast scale, and shift in occupations and professions, were indeed particularly fertile in sociological theories of the structure of the human community, *varṇa*, caste, vocation, stages of life and types of marriage, recognising or promoting cultural and social assimilation of "barbarians" and backward peoples. On the other hand, the new-comers, coming as they did from uncultured, semi-civilized stocks, were anxious to assume Indian names and obtain an entry into the rich and glorious heritage of Indo-Aryan society and religion. Even such fierce warriors and conquerors as the Yavanas, Kushans, Śakas and Huns vied with the Hindu and Buddhist princes of older lineage in showing their zeal and piety for religious endowments to Buddhism and Brahmanism on a lavish scale and even for proselytisation in North-western and Western India.

Indian Metaphysics and Cultural Synthesis

Cultural synthesis is the keynote to history in a land characterised by a variety of races, languages and levels of social development. Religion, art, morals and social institutions through the 'ages are judged in India by the measure of their contribution to social amity, peace and assimilation. Metaphysics here is not only knowledge but also the art of yoga of attainment

of supreme status and dignity of self, which becomes at the same time the unbounded extension of self, and perfect equality and solidarity of the human community. Vast and serene ontology supplies the broadest norms and myths, art motifs and symbols that promote the integration of peoples and the synthesis of Indian culture from age to age, and illumine every sector of life. These give the true meaning to the social values, traditions and movements that constitute history.

India has little history, or has at least few historians, if we take history in the sense usually given to this branch of knowledge in the West. One such historian is Kalhaṇa, the author of *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* written in the 12th century. The *Rājatarāṅgiṇī* must be regarded as a work of scientific history not merely for the author's "examination of the charters of the former kings, the consecration of temples, the laudatory tablets and (the colophons) of literary works" in order to eliminate errors as far as possible, but also for his unbiassed and impartial scrutiny of both the good and evil qualities and actions of his ruler, Harsha of Kashmir. Besides, he emulates "the divine perception of the poet, resembling Prajāpati" in reconstructing the bygone age and making it vivid to the eye. Kalhaṇa refers to as many as eleven works of former scholars, comprising the chronicles of kings which he scrutinised. But, if history in the orthodox sense is scanty in India, there are few ancient peoples in the world that have left such abundant and authentic records of what they thought of their gods, heroes and such godly, historical personages as Śrī Krishna, Mahāvīra and the Buddha; what moral ideals they cherished in their myths of the Avatāra, the Jina and the Bodhisattva; and what their kings Aśoka, Samudragupta and Harsha as well as the nobles and the elite wanted themselves as well as the common people to seek and achieve in their edicts and inscriptions. The *Purāṇas*, *Tantras* and *Smṛtis* were written from about the first century B.C. to the 18th century; the former lay down social and ethical norms and embody the dreams of life, love and death; the latter establish law, custom, culture and social gradation against the irruption of exotic ideals. Literature, both sacred and profane, poetry, song and dance speak of the joys of love as well as of wisdom and renunciation, and express the entire gamut of human feelings and sentiments without reserve or squeamishness from the most

burning sex love to the tenderest spiritual yearning and of experiences from the adventures of roués and courtesans to the political intrigues of ministers and rebels and the orgies of the Kāpālikas. Often does Indian literature match opposites, sexual delight and insight, enjoyment and withdrawal, in mirroring the true rhythm of life. Art is anthropomorphic, clear and serene as well as cosmic, agitated and mysterious, offering the vital clues to human and superhuman passion and compassion. Whatever it is, it expresses the collective aspirations of an integrated community, not the subjective whims and caprices of individual artists.

× Four Dominant Myth and Art Complexes Fashioning Culture Patterns

It is not difficult to trace the intellectual and philosophical movements together with the myths and faiths in the icons, motifs and procedures of art from age to age. One of the earliest extant sculptures of India (3rd or 2nd century B.C.), that of the Buddhist cave monastery at Bhājā in the Western Ghats, depicts Māndhātā, the archetype of the ancient pious king, the suzerain of the three worlds, and conqueror of the Gods, Asuras and men, seated triumphantly on an elephant of colossal dimensions. He looks down upon the whole earth covered with tiny figures of falling creatures under a tree uprooted by the elephant, and in another representation rides on a chariot over the bodies of the vanquished Asuras. There is also depicted Uttara Kuru or the Northern Continent, the early home of the Indo-Aryans, later on considered as the Elysium, where the Great Conqueror finds his ultimate abode and where reside all happiness and beauty along with complete freedom from desire. There revel here joyous couples, a king with his court, musicians and dancers, and a vast assemblage of people with the Tree of Wish-fulfilment in the centre. In the myth of Māndhātā the ancient Hindu conception of the Rājaṛṣi and the Buddhist conception of the Bodhisattva find an interesting fusion, derived as both these were from a common spiritual heritage. The bas-relief magnificently illustrates the basic Rg-Vedic conceptions of the victory of Righteousness (Deva) over Evil (Asura), of the falsity of the world of appearance and enjoyment (Rūpa, Māyā) and of the bliss of the eternal kingdom of righteousness and non-attachment (Svarga). It is

like a work in brush rather than in stone, and envisions the earliest Indian classical world-interpretation—the view of nature as a “world of fleeting and deceptive appearances”, of the supremacy of the forces of goodness over those of evil, and of the way of wisdom and renunciation as the way to immortality; while the proliferation of countless minute living forms that rise like thin, evanescent clusters of bubbles from the formless, undifferentiated cave-rock—the matrix of the phenomenal world—symbolises the supreme mystery of creation.

In the paintings of Ajanta, we find the celebrated Mahāyāna Buddhist world-interpretation that captures the heart of India for the first seven centuries of the Christian era. Here the beauty of the world, the sweet love and charm of woman, the joy of the senses, the happiness and suffering of man and the radiance of the Bodhisattva, are all juxtaposed scene upon scene and treated in gorgeous colours and majestic rhythms. These cover entire walls and leap to the ceilings, pillars and sides of rocks at all possible angles as if in a dream-universe with its innumerable aerial pavilions, fairy gardens, forests and skies. Space here is multi-dimensional and time is eternal, linking the past, present and future lives of man and beast by the law of pan-Karma which binds all, including the Buddha. In this palpitating dream-universe even the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas and their great compassion are phenomena, empty mirages. The world in Mahāyāna metaphysics ceases to exist in Nirvāṇa, and, in fact, like the illusory snake in the rope it never existed. It is because the Mahāyāna absolute idealism made no distinction between Saṃsāra and Nirvāṇa, and reduced them both to shadow and magic without any real nature, that Indian art could reach a universal quality, exhibiting both an inexhaustible delight in the beauty of human forms and in super-human aloofness and tranquillity. Thus it reached its Golden Age, its motifs and methods guiding art in other countries of Asia.

Another striking world-interpretation emerges about the 7th century A.D. from the doctrine of metaphysical bi-unity in Tāntrikism. This still dominates religion, art and ritual from the latest great period of Brahmanism. The classic theme of the enterplay of Śiva-Śakti, Puruṣa-Prakṛti, Nārāyaṇa-Lakṣmī and Avalokitesvara-Tārā now appears again and again, variously inflected, in the monuments of art. Nirvāṇa and Saṃsāra, eternity

and time, the dual aspects of the Absolute, now appear in the forms of the God, pure, unconditioned and quiescent, and of his consort Mahā-Śakti-Māyā, the dynamism of time and the primordial life-energy and manifestation of the universe. A significant variant is the triune, cosmic image in mid-India: Maheśa as the serene, self-absorbed Soul (Tat-puruṣa) or as dynamic Time (Mahākāla), the Dreadful Destroyer, licking blood from a plate, constitutes the middle head of the sculpture with the images of Aghora and Vāmadeva or his consort, Mahāmāyā, the Enchantress, looking at her own eternal charm in a mirror, on his two sides. The processes of Creation by Mahāmāyā and of Destruction by Mahākāla, both in the universe and in the living individual, are completely annihilated in the eternal rest of the Absolute, represented by the middle figure. Out of the polarities of the masculine and feminine principles, Śiva-Śakti, Unity in Duality, spring all the distinctions of elements, attributes and relations in Saṁsāra. Thus does Primal Mahāmāyā, the sportive or destructive and maternal or protective, feminine aspect of the Absolute and of the self hold the secret to both knowledge of the transcendental and acceptance of the life of desires and the changing flux of the phenomenal world. Śakti is at once the inaccessible supernal Essence and the concrete world and its illusion; she is Life, both universal and individual; she produces and is both enjoyment (bhukti) and salvation (mukti). To the man of knowledge Saṁsāra or Māyā-Śakti is and is not. Like the morning mist on the Ganges, Saṁsāra rises from, passes and fades into the solely real, the Great Mother.

The fourth world-interpretation, though dating from early Krishna-Bhāgavatism and the expounding of the Bhakti-yoga in the Bhagavad-Gītā and the Bhāgavata and Brahmaivaivarta Purāṇas, dominated art and literature, morals and manners in India from the 14th to the 18th century. This stands against the view of the world and relations as illusory, but regards these as true and real modes of manifestation of the energy (śakti) or sport (līlā) of Bhagavān (Krishna), who creates the universe out of his own power as Māyā, and yet in his own nature is beyond it. Painting now becomes more important than sculpture, revealing as it does the complex and subtle nuances of individual moods and mystical experiences, and in fact pools its resources with those of lyrical poetry and music in the folk schools of the Deccan,

Rajasthan and Himachala. Painters, musicians and poets abundantly reveal with a bewitching and serene loveliness, the joys and yearnings of the human soul in union or separation in the background of the love-play of Radha and Krishna on the banks and pastures of the Jamuna and the penance of Śiva and Pārvati in the Himalayas. Nature in its procession of the seasons and of day and night, the world of birds and animals, and the delights, sorrows and destiny of man, are all seen in the ideal, supra-sensible setting of a ceaseless dramatic communion between the human and the divine in which one is as necessary as the other. In Bengal the intense spiritual raptures of Chaitanya enthralled the scholars, kings and common people alike and stimulated a deep religious movement for more than two centuries grounded on free and unritualistic kirtana of the divine name and the brotherhood of all castes. The East Indian School of Vaishnavism is a most vivid illustration of the use of artistic symbols and sensuous imageries, gorgeously delineated in *kāvyas*, *nātakas* and *chamṡās* and reiterated in *kīrtanas* for the human participation, in a vicarious mood, in the mythical love sports of Krishna in *Vṛndāvana*, inspired by the *Śrīmad-bhāgavata*, the *Brahma-vaivarta Purāṇa* and the *Gīta-govinda*. Thus again do metaphysics and myth of a particular epoch govern through art and its treatment of woman, *Samsāra* and nature, the sentiments, ideals and experiences of the common man.

/ Interpretation of History in terms of Myths and Art-motifs

In India such myths of world-interpretation, Upaniṣadic, Buddhist, Tāntrika and Bhāgavata, have not worn out nor lost their majesty and charm, but are interiorised as man's faith and conscience through art, symbol, ritual and manners. These varied strands of metaphysics comprise the legacy of ages, a complex, viable blend that shapes the rules of life and the virtues of the common man of India. It is her dominant myths and metaphysics, speaking through art, that are responsible for the unity, continuity and true pattern of Indian civilization.

The implicit ontology of Indian culture has become different in different periods, but art and the ethics of social action changed without social chaos, thanks to Indian toleration. It was only Buddhism, due to its monastic celibacy and its denial of the Brahmanical theory of *Ātman* and of the social postulates of

a Divine Society and Varṇāśrama, that was in some measure a recalcitrant, uncompromising element. Yet Buddhist myth and art did not fail to react on Brahmanical society and culture. The entry of the slaves and serfs and the depressed castes, including the Chāṇḍālas and Pakkushas, into the Buddhist fraternity contributed to lessen the rigidity of caste barriers and encouraged equalitarian tendencies. (Buddhism promoted a spirit of other-worldliness and asceticism against the scholasticism, scepticism and growing materialism of the age, and gave a new stimulus to the democratic organisation and procedure of the Saṅgha, working, of course, on the foundations of the Vedic Sabhās and Samitijs. (Such democratic practices as vote by ballot, securing of a quorum and appointment of a presiding officer were carried over from the heretical religious congregation to the various village and functional self-governing institutions in the country. It was thus that the Buddhist emphasis on social equality and repudiation of the Brahmanical varṇa had its repercussions outside the field of religion and metaphysics. Again, the Buddhist acceptance of the older myths of Karma and transmigration instead of being a blighting influence stimulated people to good deeds and the winning of the fruits thereof. This was due to the Buddhist Jātaka legend and art that vividly brought home to the common people the links of the Buddha's chain of good deeds through a long succession of births in the eternal pilgrimage (saṃsāra), the life, sorrow and sorrowlessness of creatures. Buddhism interpreted Karma as the absolute, eternal, all-embracing principle of righteousness in creation which is above Brahmā, Viṣṇu and Śankara. By his stress on the absoluteness of the moral law, Gautama rescued religion from "hearsay", superstition, the accumulation of mantra and magic, penance and merit, fear and ritual adoration of power, and renovated it as the faith in "the great reality of goodness", the revelation of the moral grandeur of man. Buddhism was uncompromisingly opposed to Brahmanical rituals and animal sacrifices that had become too elaborate and costly for the common people. While its stress on the straightforward and positive Noble Eight Way of Morality (Śīla) that could be adopted by laymen and monks alike and the directness and honesty of its psychological teaching accessible to all through insight and experience (the Buddha's Doctrine means, Come and See), commended it to the masses,

they were no less attracted by the institution of the Buddhist Saṅgha and its new spirit of equality and brotherhood that constituted a courageous challenge to the Brahmanical system of caste. "My law is a law of grace for all", said the Buddha. The religion of universal love (mettā), compassion (karuṇā) and sharing had also its special appeal for the enslaved, the oppressed and the under-privileged for any age, especially for one marked by the glaring contrast of opulence and misery and by the social chaos and suffering associated with the Mauryan empire-building and fall of the sub-Himalayan tribal republics.

The emphasis on universal benevolence and compassion in the later Mahāyāna phase of Buddhism introduced into the Indian social world a new humanism and ardent spirit of sharing and service, and into the whole field of Indian literature and fine arts a new human sensitiveness, if not emotional exuberance, modifying the intellectual rigours of the classical canons of art. This trend was perhaps promoted also by the fluidity and admixture of races and change of social conditions and national temperament. Aśvaghoṣa and Āryaśūra, Kālidāsa and Bhavabhūti, all more or less show vehemence of passion and luxuriance of imagination that are in sharp contrast with the majesty and serenity of Vālmiki and the seriousness and restraint of Bhāṛavi and Māgha. Indian art under the Mahāyāna inspiration presented for the first time in world art not only perfect symbols of the moral dignity of man but also the loveliest visions of human tenderness and compassion, inspired by Aśvaghoṣa's Buddha Charita and Āryaśūra's Jātakamālā, two of the most popular books of Asia. Mahāyāna Buddhism with its human tenderness and passion, indeed, introduced into the poetical works of Aśvaghoṣa and the Buddhist sculptures of the first centuries of the Christian era that new note of sensuousness, emotionalism and artistry which ushered the Golden Age of both Indian literature and art. And the spread of Indian culture to Greater India was possible only because of the instrumentality of India's glorious art and literature. The Saddharma-pundarika (about 200 A.D.), a marvel of mixture of religion, metaphysics and poetry, which shows a marked affinity with the Bhakti-yoga of the Bhagavad-Gītā and sets forth the compassion of the Buddha for the sorrow of the world, became the Buddhist Bible of half of Asia. Buddhism within a few centuries became a world

Mahayana
art

SP religion and the torch-bearer of Indian culture in Central and South-eastern Asia because its spirit was so akin to the changing social world in the continent. Its new theism and ardent spirit of devotion and self-surrender, assimilated from the Vaishnava Bhāgavatas, Pāncharātras and Śaiva Pāsupatas, had a great appeal with the vast numbers of foreigners and mixed peoples in Gāndhāra, Kashmir, Udyāna, Kuchi and beyond. Its emphasis on the piety and active righteous living of the layman was opposed to the narrow puritanical outlook of the monk, but invaluable as the spiritual mainstay of the complex urban civilization that sprang up in the world's great highways of commerce and cultural interchange. Its tolerance, rationalism and tender humanity, its shedding of the social and institutional frame-work of caste, priesthood and ritualism of the parent culture, and the sincere, non-esoteric and public aspect of its worship eminently qualified it for its universal mission. The Buddhist Saṃgha was also a dynamic, democratic agency of proselytisation and humanitarian service among the lowly, the ignorant and the superstitious. It ceaselessly toiled not only for teaching foreign and backward peoples a new piety and code of conduct, but also for transforming and substituting their popular faiths and observances without the sacrifice of the essential Buddhist myth and doctrine. Buddhist morality, art and literature, new to an uncivilized world, and invested with a rare mystery, loveliness and sensitiveness with the incorporation of the elements of reverence, wonder and Messianic compassion and vicarious suffering of the Mahāyāna, made the success of Buddhism in foreign lands immediate and spectacular.

SP The common features of the classical-Brahmanical, Buddhist, Tāntrika and Bhakti myths were, however, far more culturally significant than their differences: all laid stress on the eternal and universal character of the Real Man and the unlimited extension of the Divine Community. Reacting amidst the lush bounty of the earth against the transience and futility of Saṃsāra, man sees the Cosmic Self or Person as the Supreme Reality, the perfect expression of human freedom, communion and goodness. The Indian man's endless enlargement of the boundaries of the self and society into the Cosmic Whole or Infinity has been a potent social-historical force in the integration of different races and cultures in a land characterised by great complexity and

heterogeneity in its social composition. His ascent from the empirical self to the Cosmic Self, the carrier of supreme and absolute status and the creator and judge of perfect order, is inspired by an impersonal, cosmic mysticism rather than by the image and worship of the personal god, and this in Brahmanism, Buddhism and Tāntrikism alike. Thus does India's cosmic sense determine the fundamental unity of the pattern of worship and the true meaning of individual and social goals in the pattern of culture, subordinating desire (kāma) and wealth (artha) to the cosmic order (dharma) and all to enlightenment (mokṣa), and, in the realm of knowledge, the subordination of politics, ethics and aesthetics to grandiose metaphysics and subtle logic.

Art as the Expression of the Soul of India

Cosmic religion, grand ontology and spiritual myth could invigorate, inspire and impel a whole people in India because of her great art. It is the authentic art which has expressed and consolidated the spirit and conscience, the serenity and tempo of the people from epoch to epoch. Largely because of the glorious, imperishable art that has inspired, exhorted and educated them, Indian civilization survives. For art stands behind what humanity dreams, strives and suffers for; art alone is eternal and indestructible amidst the chronic tumult of history.

VP Indian art has written in chisel and brush the whole history of Indian civilization. Through the successive epochs, classical, Buddhist, Jain, Purāṇic Hindu, Tāntrika and Bhakti, art logically and happily transcribed the myths, values and norms of goodness of the people. Then as the Indian man reconciled Buddhism and Brahmanism in the bosom of the Mahāyāna and the Tantrayāna, art works, whether Buddhist, Brahmanical or Tāntrika, and whether in India or Greater India, became alike in spirit and pattern. Art became less hieratical and emphasised formal values more, overstepping the narrow boundaries of creed, myth and dogma. This happened during a period, covering the 6th to the 13th centuries, almost synchronous with the Muslim advent and final domination. In India art, metaphysics, religion and literature are all intertwined through the ages and only a synoptic treatment can bring unity into the historical process. The essence of the sociological method is to build up the history of cultures of the Indian peoples in terms of art-motifs and

patterns, myths, religions, literatures and schools of Smṛti that, indeed, reveal the vital movements of social and spiritual life rather than the changes of dynasties and kingdoms. These latter usually left unaffected the real life of India that went on smoothly and serenely in her cottages, temples and sabhās.

The Secular Culture State under Akbar

More than five centuries separate the Muslim occupation of Sind (712-743 A.D.), which hardly touched India politically, from the establishment of a strong and compact monarchy embracing the whole of Hindustan by Iltutmish (1210-1236) and the subjugation of the most easterly Sena kingdom of Bengal (about 1199 A.D.). The South as far as Madura was ravaged and devastated by Kafur (1306-1312) not before another three quarters of a century. Yet another two centuries and a half elapsed before the overthrow of the last powerful southern kingdom, Vijayanagar (1565 A.D.). But India's genius for synthesis embodied itself in the political field in the South during a life and death struggle in the development of a Hindu-Muslim composite state in the medieval Muslim kingdoms of Gulbarga, Bijapur, Ahmadnagar and Golkunda and in Bengal under the Husain Shahi and Sur dynasties. The ideal ultimately migrated to Agra and Delhi, and won the support of the Imperial Moghuls. The stability of the Moghul Empire rested on the recognition of two principles, one political and the other socio-religious; both, indeed, of ancient Maurya and Gupta lineage. The political principle was paramountcy, combined with a loose central control and delegation of responsibility of administration to semi-independent kings, chiefs, and caste, guild and village assemblies. This was eulogised by the Arthaśāstra, the Mahābhārata and the Śukra Niti and by the national bard of the Gupta age, Kālidāsa. The second principle was religious liberalism and tolerance in a culture state. It was the bigoted ruler, Aurangzeb, who tried to build up a theocratic Muslim state in opposition to the secular national state of Akbar, Jahangir and Shahjahan. The Moghul Padshah-cum-Ghazi thus went against the *modus operandi* of Indian empire-building as well as of socio-cultural integration and synthesis.

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Carpentier and Herzfeld, was occupied along with Cutch, Baluchistan and the Punjab in this period by the Sassanian kings?) His journey from Aparānta or Northern Konkan to Iran is through the country of the Yavanas (i.e. Pārasikas) with whom he did not fight; but his passage leads to the suspension of merry-making of the Yavana girls, even as an untimely advent of clouds prevents lotuses from enjoying the sunshine. From Iran Raghu proceeds northward to Bāhlikadeśa or Bactria, the valley of the Oxus (Bankshu), the main channel of communication between Gāndhāra, Kāmboja, Tibet and Turkestan. Here by the middle of the fifth century (407-553 A.D.) the White Huns or Hephthalites established a powerful empire that dominated Central Asia, extending from Gāndhāra and the Indus region to Khotan and Karashahr, and that was in bitter conflict with the Persian Empire, the Oxus constituting for a period the boundary between the two empires. The dim rumblings of the see-saw struggle between the two mighty empires on the Indian borderland were audible in this country. In 484 the Huns' signal victory over Sassanid Peroz freed them for raids from the Punjab into Hindustan. To avenge these expeditions Kālidāsa makes his hero carry his victorious arms beyond the Hindukush to Bāhlika where he is said to have an encounter with the Huns; for Gāndhāra, Kāmboja and Bāhlika really belonged to India. Does not the iron pillar at Delhi refer to Emperor Chandra's (probably Chandragupta II's) "conquest of the Vahlikas in a running fight across the seven mouths of the river Sindhu"? The Imperial Guptas subjugated the territories of the Devaputras, Śāhahis and Śāhānuśāhahis, who represented the vestigial remains of the retreating Kushan power in the Punjab and North-west, and also the territory across the Hindukush mountains. "Raghu's horses, relieved of the fatigue of the journey by rolling on the banks of the Bankshu (Oxus), shook their bodies which had saffron flowers clinging to their manes". Saffron was a product of the Oxus valley and a word for saffron is balhikam. Thus did Kālidāsa extend the geographical horizon of Bhārata-varsha in the north and north-west to the Hindukush and the Oxus basin, including regions which even up to the time of the Muslim conquest were ruled by kings of Indian derivation and bore Sanskrit names and the impress of Indian culture. On his return journey Raghu quells the Kāmbojas of Badakshan and North

Afghanistan. The Kāmbojas are often mentioned in association with the Gāndhāras and Yavanas, the territory of the latter being identified with Alasanda beyond the Hindukush. Then he crosses the Himalayas and defeats the mountain peoples, the Kirātas, the Utsavasāṅketas (literally people of loose affections) and the Kinnaras—the polyandrous tribes of the Tibeto-Himalayan region and Nepal. Traversing eastward the whole length of the Himalayas along the Lauhitya or Brahmaputra he crosses the river and enters Prāgjyotiṣa, the land of the Kāmarūpas, Bhutan and Assam. There is no doubt that the conquests of Samudragupta Parākramāṅka and Chandragupta II Vikramāditya fed the imagination of the national poet of India and enabled him to reconstruct ideally the natural frontiers of India from the river Oxus in the north-west and the gateway of Lauhitya in the north-east to the Pūrvasāgara or the Bay of Bengal and the Mahodadhi or the great Indian Ocean on the south. Thus the ideal empire of India is bounded only by the seas (velā pravalāyām parikhikritasāgarām), comprising the whole of Jambu-dvīpa.

Like the narrow strip between the desert and the mountains, which forms the gateway to Delhi and the plains of Hindustan, the plateau of Malwa (ancient Avanti), south of the Indian desert, is another cockpit of India, facilitating, as it does, the movement between the Indus plains and the east, across the corridors of the Sindh (Sindhu) and the Betva rivers, and the south to the Deccan. The Malwa plateau connected historically Gujarat, Rajputana and the Deccan, with Ujjayinī, the meeting point of the mid-Indian routes, as the scene of many migrations, invasions and critical battles in Indian history. Aśoka's occupation of the viceregal seat at Ujjayinī and Agnimitra's at Vidiśā, the siege of Mādhyamika near Chitore in Rajputana by the Yavanas, mentioned by Patañjali, the removal of the Imperial Gupta capital to Ujjayinī by Chandragupta (Vikramāditya) after his conquest of the Śakas, and the final routing of the Huns by Yaśodharman, King of Daśapura in Western Malwa (called Dakṣhiṇa-Sindhu in the Mahābhārata and Sindhu in the Meghadūta and the Mālati-Mādhava), testify to the ancient strategic importance of Malwa as a bastion of resistance against occupation of the Midland country by foreigners.

It was on the banks of the river Sindhu, the tributary of the Chambal, in eastern Malwa that the tide of the Yavanas, who had even penetrated into Mewar, was successfully arrested by Agnimitra's son in the 2nd century B.C. after the fall of the Mauryas. The Purāṇic and other Indian evidences indicate that the Śaka conquest preceded that of the Yavanas or Greeks in India. The latter were established in the Punjab and the Kabul valley about the beginning of the 2nd century B.C. The Śakas came to India not directly by the Khyber route but from the other side of the Indus over the Bolan pass from Seistan through Drangiana, which they conquered in the middle of the 2nd century B.C. The Jaina text, Kalakāchārya-kathānaka, mentions that the Sagakula, i.e. the Śaka race, came to India by first crossing the Indus in ships and went to Kathiawar. They occupied the kingdom of Surāshṭra (Kathiawar and Gujarat) and divided the country among themselves. Next they won a naval victory on the Indus over the Seleucid Greeks in India and gradually conquered Taxila, Gāndhāra and Kāpiśa (77 B.C. to 60 B.C.). They then proceeded to Ujjayinī, where they imprisoned the Gardabhilla king and established one of their chiefs as ruler, and to Mathurā. Thus one of the oldest Śaka rulers of India, Maues, extended his rule from Mathurā to Kāpiśa, reaching out from the Śaka settlements in Kathiawar and the Indus delta. In 58 B.C. Maues was defeated by the Mālavas, who regained Ujjayinī, and met his death. Other Śaka incursions took place much later in the wake of the Parthian and the Yueh-chi invasions of the Punjab, the Śakas this time coming to the Punjab along the Kabul valley and also along the Yasin valley, Kashmir and Udyāna via the Bolan route. The Śaka Empire of Maues in Kathiawar and the Indus valley could not be revived, but from about 150 A.D. to 390 A.D. the Śaka power held Malwa, Cutch, Sind, Surāshṭra and Mahārāshṭra (including Konkan and other districts). Towards the end of the 3rd century A.D. Śakasthāna meant not only Seistan but also the lower Indus valley, Kathiawar, Gujarat and even Malwa. The Śaka Kshatrapas captured the strategic Sātavāhana port of Kalyāṇa (on the eastern shore of Bombay harbour) and subjugated the Konkan coast, diverting the lucrative Roman trade to Barygaza "under guard". This is referred to in the Periplus of the Erythræan Sea. The Arabian sea coast below the Vindhya with its important ports was a

prized possession that ultimately was seized by the Śakas after about a century's warfare with the Sātavāhana emperors who had to satisfy themselves with their Western commerce through the port of Vaijayanti and their eastern commerce through the capital city of Dharaṇikoṭa. The Śaka satraps through their conquest of Malwa not only commanded the mid-Indian route of communication but their powerful navy enabled them to reap the benefit of the Western commerce concentrated, before the use of monsoon for navigation, in the ports of Barbara (Barbaricum at the mouth of the Indus), Sūrpāraka, Bharukachcha and Kalyāṇa. The conquest of the entire Indus valley from Taxila to Barbara, Malwa, Gujarat, Surāshṭra and Konkan and the deployment of both naval and land forces enabled the Northern and Western Śakas to easily establish and entrench themselves in North-western, Western and Central India for well-nigh four to five centuries. They were ultimately overthrown by the Gupta Emperor Chandragupta II (Vikramāditya).

It was a signal heroic achievement of the Hindu Rājachakravarti from the Ganges valley of completely stemming the tide of "barbarian" Śaka invaders who steadily swarmed into the Indus basin and Malwa for four centuries (during the last two centuries B.C. and the first two centuries A.D.) and gradually annexed not only North-western India but also Western, Central and a considerable portion of Northern India including the holy land of Bhāgavatism. No wonder this decisive victory revived heroic traditions in Indian legends and tales as well as in sculptures. The restoration of Vidiśā and Ujjayinī as sub-capitals under Chandragupta from the beginning of the 5th century also indicates a correct appreciation of the danger of the Śaka menace to the Ganges basin from this region in the flank. Western and Central India was, to be sure, the scene of continuous Śaka and Pahlava drifts from Seistan and Arachosia (Kandahar) through Baluchistan and the lower Indus valley from the first to the fourth century A.D. Śaka families settled in Kāpiśa, Gāndhāra, Eastern Punjab, Ujjain and Mathurā and were gradually assimilated into Hindu society. One of the greatest of the Śaka overlords, Rudradāman, established his empire in India, including Aparānta (Konkan) in the South, Ākara (capital Vidiśā), Avanti (capital Ujjain), Maru (Marwar), Surāshṭra (capital Girinagara)

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and Sindhu-Sauvīra (the lower Indus), between 130 A.D. and 150 A.D., and entered into a matrimonial alliance with the Śātavāhana house. But his successors were feeble. The Śaka-Pahlava kings and the Ābhīras who wrested power from the latter continued to rule in Surāshṭra, Malwa and Mathurā up to the rise of the Guptas in the fourth century A.D. Skandagupta (455-467 A.D.) had to deal with a new formidable enemy—the Huns who made their first incursion into India from the basin of the Oxus towards the middle of the fifth century A.D. He won his memorable victory over the Huns and the Mlechchhas, who “shook the empire” in the reign of his father, presumably, somewhere in Malwa as recorded in his Bhitari inscription. The White Huns defeated the King of Persia in 484 A.D. and their principal centres in Iran were Badakshan and Bamiyan whence they penetrated into India. The Hun Empire at the end of the 5th and the beginning of the 6th century A.D. included Iran, Khotan, Gāndhāra, the Punjab, Kashmir and parts of Rajputana, Gujarat and Malwa. The metropolis of Abiria, the land of the Ābhīras, became Minnagara, the city of Min, in the Indus delta with the port of Barbaricum nearby (but sometimes identified with Mandasor, or Madhyamika or Nagara). The Eran inscriptions refer to the struggle between Bhānugupta (510 A.D.) and the Huns in Central India and to the subjugation of Sagar and other parts of the Central Provinces by Toramāṇa (510-515 A.D.). His son Mihiragula (515-535 A.D.) ruled from Sialkot in the Punjab over even a larger empire extending from the Himalayas to Rajputana and Malwa. Both Toramāṇa and Mihiragula enormously increased the power and prestige of the Hun Empire in India. It was in Malwa that a confederacy of Hindu kings, headed by Samrāt Yaśodharman of Daśapura or Mandasor, finally destroyed the Hun military power in 528 A.D. by defeating Mihiragula who wanted to advance further eastwards. Yaśodharman (Viśṇuvardhana) extended his sovereignty over Eastern India (Prāchi), Western India, Malwa and the north (Kashmir), “from the Brahmaputra to the Western Ocean and from the Himalayas to Mahendragiri”; he conquered countries “which not even the Guptas nor the Huns could ever conquer, and to whose feet homage was paid even by Mihiragula,” runs the inscription. We know little of this Indian Napoleon who suddenly appears like a dazzling solitary star on the Indian

political firmament, shakes the Hun Imperial power, founds a vast empire and then within only a decade or so suddenly fades away. Emperor Harshavardhana (606-648 A.D.) restored the unity and peace of India, which she had lost since the downfall of the Imperial Guptas, by annexing Malwa, obtaining in fief the rich kingdom of Valabhī (comprising Gujarat and Kathiawar) and pursuing the Hun hordes "as far as the inaccessible country and the snowy mountains of Tokharistan". The vulnerable frontier regions of Kashmir, Sind and Valabhī came under his influence, and Malwa was his bastion of resistance against the Huns. In the eighth and ninth centuries A.D. the invasions of tribes from the Indus countries, of the Gurjaras from Northern Rajputana and of other foreigners again endangered the Brahmanical culture of Madhyadeśa by pressing forward to Malwa, and this bastion of Madhyadeśa defence was lost for a few centuries to the Gurjaras, Tomaras, Gaharwars and Chandelas, who became ruling powers in Northern India. A century later Mahmud of Ghazni after the sack of Somnath suffered serious reverses at the hands of Bhoja of Western Malwa who barred his way of retreat and compelled his army to flee to safety through the desert to Multan. Full five centuries elapsed after the Arab conquest of Sind and the persistent but futile efforts of the Arab chieftains of Brahmanabad to conquer Malwa and enter the Deccan, before the Turko-Afghan invasion of India from the north-west could force the Delhi gateway and penetrate into the heart of Hindustan. At the beginning of this millennium the rise into power of the House of Ghazni, which occupied parts of Central Asia and the entire trans-Indus region, including Khorasan and Afghanistan, and subsequently conquered the Punjab, initiated the first stage of the Moslem conquest of Hindustan. The first base of the Moghul expedition to India was the valley of the Kabul whence Lahore was easily subjugated, serving as a most important forward base for movements in three directions: to Delhi, to Multan and Sind and also to Kashmir. The occupation of Delhi served as usual as the strategic and decisive factor in the conquest of Hindustan.

The Maintenance of Scientific Frontiers

When the "scientific" frontiers could not be maintained and powerful Iranian, Greek, Parthian, Kushan, Śaka, Hun, Arab and

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Timurid kingdoms arose in Afghanistan, Kashmir and the Punjab or in Sind and Kathiawar, India became the victim of a series of invasions. The British placed strong frontier garrisons at Peshawar, ancient Purushapura, at Rawalpindi, near ancient Taxila, at Quetta, Lahore, Ferozepur, Karachi, Multan, Ambala, —all on the highways of invasion from the north-western passes, while they also pursued a steadfast policy of excluding from Afghanistan and Seistan all foreign powers and retained full control in the Persian gulf. On the other hand, the north-western gateways could also be used for the diffusion of Buddhism and Indian culture in the Asiatic continent under the Mauryan, Kushan and Gupta empires when the whole of Gāndhāra and Kashmir were under their possession. Samudragupta Parākramānka conquered the Punjab, Afghanistan and Gāndhāra and used the Chinese and Iranian titles, Daivaputra-Shāhi-Shāhānushāhi, formerly used by the great Kushan emperors. With the Hun conquest of Gāndhāra towards the close of the 5th and the beginning of the 6th centuries A.D. hosts of outlandish barbarians poured into the Indian plains. Yet in the seventh century A.D. the valley of Kabul was a part of India. Here the Chinese pilgrim Hiuen-Tsang met at Kāpiśā, the junction of the Asian trade routes and a Buddhist city, the first Hindu and Jain ascetics of his journey.

Not the Punjab, Sind, Gujarat or Malwa but the plains of the Ganges are more suitable for empire building. The magnitude of population, wealth and resources as well as the opportunity of admixture of race and culture elements made the Ganges valley the focus of successive historical attempts at the political unification of India as well as of recurrent reform movements dissolving pure Brahmanism into Hinduism. Thus, after the Gupta era, the emperors of Āryāvarta—Yaśodharman, the Maukharis, the house of Puṣyabhūti and Harsha of Thaneshwar and Kanauj, the Gurjara-Pratihāras of Kanauj, and finally the Pālas of Bengal with their "Trailokyavijaya" campaigns—successively had their major task of defending the country against new foreign invaders. The Moghul conquest of Hindustan united Fergana, Kabul and Delhi under one empire and gave peace; but the conquest of the important frontier province, Kandahar, by the Shah of Persia in 1622 was the first serious disaster for the Moghul Empire. Neither Jahangir nor Shahjehan nor Aurangzeb

could recapture Kandahar that has been since lost to India for good. Aurangzeb followed a vigorous north-west frontier policy, and, though he could not recapture Kandahar, he defeated the Afridis and the Afghans and strengthened the Indian garrison at Peshawar. Afghanistan continued under the Moghul sway until 1739. The great Maratha-Afghan battle of Panipat in 1761 crippled the Marathas and paved the way for the English supremacy of India. It was particularly fortunate for the latter that the Afghans who aimed at the conquest of Hindustan on the downfall of the Moghul Empire were prevented from doing so due to internal troubles at Kabul and the impotence of the successors of Ahmad Shah Abdali. The loss of the north-west frontier from Kandahar to Kashmir and from Peshawar to Samarkand has always threatened the peace and unity of India through the ages.

On the other hand, Indian culture, religion and trade influenced Central Asia and China, especially in those periods when she controlled the Central Asian land-routes. Britain after the conquest of India sealed the north-western routes for stability and security, and thus isolated India from the rest of Asia. The Prime Minister of India, Pandit Jawaharlal Nehru, often stresses that this sudden isolation had been one of the most remarkable and unfortunate consequences of British rule in India. Rapson observes in this connection: "The power which has succeeded in welding the subordinate ruling powers into one great system of government is essentially naval, and since it controls the sea-ways, it has been forced in the interests of security to close the land-ways. This has been the object of British policy in regard to the countries which lie on the frontiers of the Indian Empire, Afghanistan, Baluchistan and Burma. Political isolation has thus followed as a necessary consequence of political unity. But it must be remembered that this political isolation is a recent and an entirely novel feature in the history of India. It is the great landmark which separates the present from the past."

The Ancient Land-routes

Many famous ancient routes, that were virtually closed as the result of British occupation, had for centuries connected India with the outside world. These were highways of traffic and pilgrim travel as well as of migration and invasion:

(1) The north-western land-route through Afghanistan, joining up with the pan-Asian trade route at Balkh and crossing the Oxus to the Caspian Sea and the Middle East. This was the great historic route of migration, conquest, trade and cultural intercourse which connected India with Central Asia, China and the Middle East. There were two parallel routes: the earlier one started from ancient Pushkalāvati (modern Charsada, 20 miles north-east of Peshawar), while the later route, used since the beginning of the millennium after the establishment of Purushapura (modern Peshawar) as the capital of the Imperial Kushans, started from Purushapura and followed a more south-westerly line along the Kabul river towards the west. The great Mauryan Imperial road that ran from Pāṭaliputra to Bālhika was probably constructed on the pattern of the imperial roads of the Achæmenids in Western and Central Asia. Gāndhāra, Kāmboja and Sind that were included within the Persian Empire must have been connected with the great Achæmenid roads to Persepolis. From the time of the foundation of the Seleucid Empire at the beginning of the 4th century B.C. in the north-western borderlands of India commerce became brisk between the valleys of the Oxus, the Indus and the Ganges, promoted by the great arterial route from Magadha to Bactriana, which also radiated from Kauśāmbī in the upper Ganges valley to the ancient sea-ports of Bharukachcha and Sūrpāraka.

(2) The Western Indo-Levantine route which started from the Indus delta through the Bolan and Mula passes to Kandahar and crossing the Helmand ran to Persia and the Mediterranean. This was also much used in ancient times for the transport of Indian merchandise through Persia to the Levant. The rise of the Kushan Empire with its control over the Indus valley, Gāndhāra and Turkestan safeguarded the major routes of communication—the north-western route from Gāndhāra to the Middle East through Bactria and to China through Turkestan and also the western route from Kandahar through Persia to the Mediterranean sea-ports. Thus a regular trade was established between the Ganges, the Indus, the Euphrates, the Oxus, and the Mediterranean, Caspian and Black seas. It was by the Western Indo-Levantine route that the Roman Empire used to trade with China through the Indian intermediaries in the early centuries of this millennium. Political conditions determined

which route between India, Persia and Central Asia was used for Asian trade. Thus, for instance, in the fourth and fifth centuries A.D., when the trade route east of the Oxus became insecure with the decay of the Roman, Kushan and Hun empires, the caravan route from Merv through Kandahar and the Bolan pass to India became important, and Indo-Sassanian commerce and cultural intercourse established themselves along this channel. The western route was also a highway of invasion and conquest first by the Achæmenid emperors, who after their conquest of the Indus valley gave the name to India, and then by the Sassanians, Śakas, Pahlavas and Ābhīras.

(3) The coastal Indo-Egyptian route through inhospitable Makran and the Mula pass or along the coastal strip in Baluchistan which crossing the valley of the Euphrates and the Tigris proceeded to Arabia and Egypt. This was much used by the Arab merchants during the middle ages. Las Bela in Southern Baluchistan is, like Peshawar and Quetta, a true gateway to India which was crossed by successive waves of human migration for centuries in search of the fertile Indus low-lands.

(4) Two important roads across the Pamirs and the Karakoram mountains linked Kashmir with the Chinese route meeting it at Kashgar and Khotan respectively. Fa-Hien travelled from Khotan to a town in Ladakh not clearly identified. He must have travelled along the Indo-Tibetan caravan route through the Karakoram pass and gone through Kashmir and Darada territory to Udyāna crossing the Indus. For centuries India's contact with Tibet and China was through the Zogi-la pass in Ladakh and the Karakoram pass immediately leading towards Khotan on the southern Chinese caravan route or towards the Tibetan plateau. This was one of the highways by which the Buddhist monks and pilgrims of Kashmir, which was one of the principal seats of Buddhist learning and culture, reached the Tarim basin for the spread of Mahāyāna Buddhism, and established Indian colonies and settlements on the oases along both the northern and southern caravan routes to China. There was also the more important western route through the Baramulla gateway and Gilgit, ascending the Pamir mountain-knot for reaching the great pan-Asian highway at Kashgar (Kasha). The army of Kaniṣka I under the command of Si also crossed the Taghdumbash Pamir through the Tashkurghan

pass and emerged into the plain below either near Yarkand or near Kashgar. It was when the nomad Western Turks appeared on the scene and the Tibetan bandits grew too turbulent that both the caravan routes were interrupted, and the Chinese pilgrims to India preferred the overseas route. Kashmir had been successfully invaded by foreigners, via the Karakoram, Sassar and Zogi-la passes. In the 14th century the Turk Dulca and the Bhautt Rincuna entered Kashmir and subjugated the Hindu kingdom of the valley. In the 16th century Mirza Muhammad Haider with a small Moghul force penetrated into Kashmir through the Zogi-la pass. Again, Sultan Said Khan of Kashgar invaded Srinagar through the Zogi-la pass in 1531 and defeated the Muhammadan king, Muhammad Shah. It was from the 7th century onwards, if not earlier, that the intercourse of the Ladakh region of Kashmir with Tibet became regular and significant on the wake of the political unification of the Tibetan plateau and Nepal consummated by the Tibetan conqueror Srong-tsan Gampo. This emperor and his successors were by no means averse to cultural movements, and indeed we can easily discern some of the vital elements of Gupta art following the track from Leh to Tibet and Nepal. It is noteworthy that the Chinese made an attack on Baltistan in Kashmir in 736-747 A.D. Lalitāditya-Muktāpīḍa, King of Kashmir, then negotiated with the Chinese Emperor for an alliance against the Tibetans mentioning that he had made a common cause with the King of Central India, probably Yaśovarman of Kanauj, and had blocked the five routes of Tibet.

(5) The land-route from Northern Bengal, Assam and Manipur across Upper Burma along the valleys of the Chindween, Irawady, Salween and Mekong to Tonkin and thence by sea to Southern China. This was a celebrated route connecting India, Burma, Thailand and Indo-China and was used from the first centuries of the millennium till at least the 9th century A.D. It was connected by another route from Dvārāvātī and Kambuja. It is remarkable that there were ancient and now forgotten settlements along the entire stretch of the mountainous terrain from Assam and Manipur to the upper reaches of the Mekong and the Red River. Gerini observes in this connection: "From the Brahmaputra and Manipur to the Tonkin gulf we can trace a continuous string of petty states ruled by those scions of the

Kshatriya race using the Sanskrit or the Pāli languages, in official documents, after the Indu style and employing Brahman priests for the propitiatory ceremonies connected with the Court and the State. Among such Indu monarchies we may mention those of Tagong, Upper Pagan, and Sen-wi in Burma; of Muang Hang, Chieng Rung, Muang Khwan, and Daśārṇa (Luang Phrah Bang) in the Lau country and of Agranagara (Hanoi) and Champā in Tonkin and Annam."

(6) The land-route through the passes of the Himalayas across Sikkim and the Chumbi valley to Tibet and China. One invasion of the Ganges valley took place from the north-east across the Tibetan mountain passes—the invasion of Wang-hiuen-tse, envoy of the Chinese Emperor Tai TOUNG, who was aided by Srong-tsan Gampo, king of Tibet, and Kumāra king of Kāmarūpa. The Tibetan invader laid waste a considerable area of Northern India, imprisoned the Minister of Emperor Harsha and went back to China. He is said to have conquered half of India. After his death in the middle of the 7th century A.D. his grandson continued to rule over the Tibetan dominion in India. Tibet, the land of the hermits, had an extensive empire including Nepal and Eastern India for about two centuries after the death of Harsha. At the beginning of the 13th century Muhammad Bakhtyar Khilji after his conquest of Varendra and capture of the city of Gaur went out on an expedition to Tibet (1206 A.D.) from Devkot in Dinaipur. After crossing the Bagmati or Tiesta he marched through Kāmarūpa and came down to Tibet after a fifteen days' march through a most difficult mountainous terrain. He was victorious in a hard-fought battle, but had to retreat, meeting disasters all the way back to Devkot. The Tibet road was the great highway of Buddhist and Tāntrika pilgrim travel between Magadha or Vaṅga and Tibet. In the Tabaqat-i-Nasiri (middle of 13th century) we read: "Between Kamarupa and Tibet there are thirty-five mountain passes through which horses are brought to Lakhnauti (Gaur)". The Burmans and the Shans invaded Kāmarūpa in the past across the mountainous eastern frontier, Assam deriving its name from the Burmese Ahom race; while the Maghs of Arakan, along with the Portuguese, devastated the eastern and lower deltas of Bengal. But, on the whole, the movement of culture was eastward. Indian culture met Chinese culture in the Mekong valley

in the Far East as it did in the north in the Tarim basin. British India was, on the whole, a sealed country, isolated from the rest of the Asian continent and incapacitated from wielding that cultural influence by which she had left an indelible impress on one-half of humanity through the past centuries.

Within the Moghul and British empires in India, Rajputana, especially Mewar, with its many hills and forts, through which ran the highway from the Ganges valley to Malwa, Gujarat and the Western Coast, had been the bastion of Rajput resistance and could be won only through the combination of force and diplomacy. The consolidation of Moghul power in India rested on alliances with the Rajputs. The Peshwas could not win over the latter under their banner of Hindu-Pad-Pādshāhi. The British, after defeating the principal powers of India, could easily succeed in obtaining their friendship through treaties of protection and subordinate co-operation.

The Classic Ideal of Universal Sovereignty

The well-marked geographical divisions of the Indian sub-continent into homogeneous natural and cultural regions led to the formation of various independent kingdoms and principalities, as in Europe, that had a separate and chequered history of their own. Such political entities in the north include the Pañchanada or the Punjab, Kashmir, the Gangetic doab, Avanti, Sūrasena, Kośala, Magadha, Aṅga, Vaṅga and Kaṭiṅga. The political boundaries, of course, differed from epoch to epoch depending upon the relative strength of the kings and dynasties of the various kingdoms. In the south the natural divisions led to the system of the Trairājya, i.e. the triple Pāṇḍya, Chola and Kerala kingdoms, each of which had a distinct history of its own. It was regional peculiarities more than dynastic ambitions, as in the Ganges valley, that maintained the political entity of the Pāṇḍyamaṇḍalaṁ, Tondamaṇḍalaṁ and Kerala through the epochs. Corresponding to such well-marked political entities are Magadha, Sind, Gujarat and Bengal in Northern India. It was from the northern Indo-Gangetic plains that the Maurya, Kushan and Gupta empires took their birth and welded the various kingdoms and principalities of a considerable portion of India into a unity. The Rājasūya and Aindramahā-bhisheka sacrifices of the Vedic Sārvabhauma kings, mentioned

in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa; the epic ideal of political integration of India, symbolised by the Aśvamedha and the Rājasūya sacrifices, sanctified by the presence of Krishna-Vāsudeva after the battle of Kurukshetra; Kauṭilya's conception of universal sovereignty extending to the four quarters (chaturānta) and the Maurya and Gupta conception of the Ekarāt Chakravartin, the supreme monarch of Jambu-dvīpa—all these in the successive epochs have embodied the objective of the political unification of Āryāvarta (Dharaṇibandha) that has dominated her kings and peoples. This ideal of Samrāt, Chakravartin or Mahārājādhirāja has been stressed throughout the entire course of Indian civilization in many kāvyas and inscriptions of big and small aspirants to Imperial power. Gautama the Buddha borrowed his idea of the Empire of Dharma from the ancient Vedic political ideal of Chakravartin. "A king, I am," he says, "the king of supreme righteousness. The royal chariot wheel in righteousness do I set rolling on the wheel that no one can turn back again." Sometimes, as in the case of the Mauryan Empire, it was "world conquest" (digvijaya) by means of dharma (dharmavijaya). Sometimes it was both digvijaya and dharmavijaya, as in the case of the Gupta, Vākātaka and Sātavāhana empires, a unification through the might of arms (parākrama) and re-establishment of Hindu society and Sanskrit culture as well as defence of the holy land against the foreign invaders. The Sātavāhanas like their predecessors, the Vākātakas, embodied the Vindhya-Śakti, born of the geography of Middle India, separated from the northern empires by the Vindhyas. The basic political traditions flowing from the Sātavāhana Empire had an unbroken continuity and provided the historic mission of the Vijayanagara Empire, that for three centuries comprised an impregnable bulwark against Moslem invasions and of the Maratha Empire aiming at Sārvabhaumarāja in the middle of the seventeenth century.

Bharata, Country and Culture

If the political unification of all India and achievement of sole supreme sovereignty (Aikādhirājyam) has remained far from being achieved due to the vicissitudes of political history in the different epochs, Indian religion, art and ritual have produced a cultural unity. Ancient Purāṇas, poems, temples, gods and

pilgrimages all instil into the Indian mind the most essentially fundamental unity of India. With her varied climate, soil and topography and intersected by lofty mountains and mighty rivers, India is sub-divided into many regions and inhabited by congeries of races and peoples. Yet in their vision there is one mother-land from the snow-clad mountain in the north to the bridge of Rāmachandra in the southern ocean (Himavat setu paryantam), with the Ganges as the pearl garland (Gaṅgā-mauktika-hārīṇī), the Himalayas and the Vindhya as ear-pendants (Himavat-Vindhya-kuṇḍalā) and the people all common children of Bhārata who first established sovereignty over the land (Bhārati yatra Santatiḥ). The traditional cultural divisions of Bhārata-varsha are six: (1) Middle Country (Madhyadeśa), (2) Himalayan Region (Himavanta), (3) North-Western Region (Uttarāpatha), (4) Deccan (Dakṣiṇāpatha), (5) Eastern India (Pūrvānta), and (6) Western India (Aparānta). But these divisions are welded together into one holy land "lying north of the Samudra and south of the Himādri", whose boundaries are sometimes extended to the north and north-west, including Uttara Kuru, Uttara Madra, Bālhika (Balkh) and even Pārasika or Persia.

The Institutions of Pilgrimage and Pageant

But Bhārata-varsha is not a mere geographical integration. The Vishṇu Purāṇa includes among the principal nations of Bhārata the foreign Huns, the Mādras and the Pārasikas, but points out that Bhārata is the land of works, or virtuous acts and pious ceremonies (Karma-bhūmi) and not of enjoyment alone (Bhoga-bhūmi). Manu also stresses that the land is made by the gods (deva-nirmitam deśam). The sacred cities, lakes, rivers and mountains of Bhārata-varsha are distributed throughout the length and breadth of the continent, including sites in the Himalayas as well as in the far south up to the Setuvandha. The seven holy cities of Bhārata-varsha (sapta-mokshadā-puri) are Ayodhyā, Mathurā, Māyā (Hardwar), Kāśī (Banaras), Kānchi (Conjeevaram), Avantikā (Ujjain) and Dvārāvati (Dwarka) representing all the cultural regions of India. The seven sacred rivers are the Gaṅgā, Jamuna, Godāvari, Sarasvatī, Narmadā, Sindhu and Kāverī. The seven holy mountains (sapta-kulāchala) are Mahendra, Malaya, Sahya, Sūktimāna, Gandhamādana, Vindhya and Pāripātra. Thus is Himavat-setu-paryantam comprehended into a spiritual unity.

The sacred temples of Vishṇu, Śiva and Devī are placed on the principal mountains and lakes or sea-shores and on the banks of the mighty rivers scattered throughout the vast country. In the farthest north in the Himalayas near to where India meets Tibet and China, we have the temples of Amaranātha, Kedāranātha and Badrī Nārāyaṇa in the silence and majesty of the glacier-clad heights. Farthest in the east we have the temples of the Mother Goddess at Kāmākhyā where the river Brahmaputra makes a vast swing around and Hindu observance mingles with Chinese ritual infiltrating from across the north-eastern mountain passes. There is also the temple of Śiva at Chandranātha on the inaccessible mountain fastness of Chittagong overlooking the boundary of another territory. In the farthest south on the sea-shore of the tempest-tossed Cape, we have the temple of the love-lorn maiden goddess, Kanyā Kumārikā. In the farthest west we have the temples of Śiva at Somnath and of Vishṇu at Dwarka. In Ajmere surrounded by the great desert we have the temple of Sāvitrī, where the morning sun reflects the purity of the goddess on the calm water of the sacred Pushkara lake. Many are the sacred temples of gods and goddesses on the meandering courses of the sacred rivers Gaṅgā, Jamuna, Godāvarī, Sarasvatī, Narmadā, Sindhu and Kāverī, at the falls of most of the great streams, such as the Gomukhī, the source of the Ganges in the Himalayas, and of the Kāverī in the dense forests of Karnatak, and also on their mouths on the sea. Wherever a river takes a circuitous course or flows in a northerly direction or again joins another river, and a high scarp or hill overlooks a valley, or a great lake spreads out its pellucid waters, or the plain and the desert meet in vivid contrasts of life and vegetation, we have sacred temples and shrines that must be visited by the pious pilgrims from every part of India.

India herself is the scripture of Indian religion. Pilgrimages to the holy places in different parts of the country are a highly aspired mode of attainment of spiritual bliss. The twelve great līṅgas of Śiva are distributed in every quarter of India including Kedāra in the Himalayas, Rāmeśvara in Setubandha, Mahākāla in Ujjayinī, Viśveśvara in Banaras and Somanātha in Surāshṭra. The sacred temples of the Mother Goddess are as many as fifty-two, each a tīrtha (place of pilgrimage) and holding in the site one of the many fragments of her sacramented

body cut into pieces by Vishṇu's disc from the shoulders of disconsolate Śiva. Even in far-off Baluchistan Hingula is a sacred Sati-tīrtha. The institution of going round the holy places of India is ancient and was particularly stimulated by Gupta imperialism and re-affirmation of cultural nationalism. The special places of ceremonial oblation to ancestors (śrāddha) are Badrī Nārāyaṇa, Hardwar and Kurukshetra in the north, the sea-shore at Jagannātha in the east and Prabhāsa in the west, Gayā, Prayāga, Pushkara and Amarakaṇṭaka in middle India, and Dhanuṣkoṭi in the extreme south. Here again the whole of India is pictured on the occasion of man's dream beyond life and death. All Indians must visit at least once during their life-time the eternal city of India, Banaras, about three thousand years old, and aspire to lay their bones on its sacred ghat by the Ganges. Here are the temples of Viśveśvara and Annapūrṇā. Banaras is the national resting place of old age and final repose; for he who dies in Śiva's city attains Śiva-hood.

If the eternal city of Śiva and the last rite or cremation at the Ganges Ghat of Maṇikarṇikā are the lure of man in old age from every part of India, the ancient legends of Rāma and Sitā and the pageants of Rāmanavamī come to the whole of India from Ayodhyā as those of Krishna and the festival of Janmāshṭamī come from Mathurā and Brajabhūmi. The worship of Chāṇḍī in spring even connects India with Laṅkā, where Rāmachandra offered his lotus-eye at the feet of the Goddess on the eve of the final encounter with the demon-king Rāvaṇa. Thus is Ceylon included in the geographical synthesis of India. The festivals of India are cyclical in the recurrent procession of the twelve or thirteen moons of the solar year and many of these commemorate the birth of an incarnation of God, a mythical hero, a patron saint or a religious head, or the rise of an important religious or philosophical doctrine, each associated with some region or other in the sub-continent.

The Deep-seated Unity of Indian Civilization

Geographically, the whole of India is brought daily into the cults and faiths of the people, into their ritual ablutions and worship by hymns and prayers, and periodically by the institution of pilgrimage to the sacred cities, rivers, lakes and mountains and the principal temples of gods and goddesses distributed

in every part of the land. Politically, the unity of India is the aspiration of every monarch who aims at nothing short of becoming the Universal Emperor, Rāja-Chakravartin, with his kingdom stretching up to the shores of the ocean (āsamudra-kṣhiṭṣa) and his war-chariot triumphantly reaching the frontiers of heaven (ānākarathayarti). Historically, the Indian man's history and destiny merge into eternity, with its vast cycles of Kṛta, Tretā, Dvāpara and Kali yugas (named from the throws of the Indian game of dice), the ups and downs of civilizations and of Patriarchs (Manus) and Progenitors (Brahmās), and the recurrent triumphs of Righteousness through the advent of the Reincarnations (Viṣṇu, Buddha, Tirthankara or Śakti) when evil is too much with mankind. Sociologically, the organic or spiritual hierarchy of functional groups, roles and vocations (varṇas) is applicable to mankind in general, and is regarded as emanating during Creation from the different limbs of the Universal, Cosmic Man (Puruṣa). India is divided into vocations, classes and castes, but varṇa is the universal, normative four-fold ordering of society conceived on the basis of degree of culture and sociality, and rooted in the cosmic law of equilibrium or dharma. Metaphysically, the Indian man is universal (vaiśvānara). "The differences of varṇa are not real; the whole world is Brāhma (the creation of Brahmā), since it was created by Brahmā in former ages and was evolved into varṇas by occupations", says the Mahābhārata (Śānti Parva, 108-10). The Man Universal is the true, eternal expression of human freedom and equality in India, of justice and goodness in all human relations and institutions, and of sharing, service and solidarity of all groups and classes. The real Universal Man (Viśvātman), the Universal State under a sārva-bhauṃa monarch and the Commonalty of the Universe (Svadeśaḥ-bhuvana-trayam) embody India's endless quest for unity and solidarity in a land marked for its variety of physical conditions, races, customs, languages, social institutions and levels of culture. Neither the spread of Greco-Roman institutions or of Christianity, nor the empires of Augustus, Charlemagne and Napoleon could produce in Europe the deep, underlying unity that is characteristic of India. The unity of civilization is far more potent than what can be produced by the accumulated forces of race and environment, nationalism or political suzerainty. Essentially, India's history in the future lies in

strengthening and maintaining the integrity of Indian civilization that transcends the diversities of race, language and manners of the different Provinces and States. India, welding together the Provinces and States into a federal democratic Republic, is once again in the course of rebirth. The fulfilment of her history of five thousand years solely depends upon national idealism and ardent faith in the essential unity of Indian civilization and its historic mission on the scene of Asia.

PART II

THE RISE OF INDIAN CIVILIZATION

CHAPTER IV

THE BEGINNINGS OF CIVILIZATION ON THE SINDHU

The Rise of the Indus-Mihran Civilization

One of the cradles of world civilization is the Indus river fringe to which were diverted from pre-historic times drifts of proto-Australoid and perhaps Negrito stocks from the steppes of Asia as these suffered from recurrent drought and over-population. Despite the onset of dry conditions, the last five millennia before Christ showed an abundant rainfall in the Indus valley, as in Egypt and Lower Mesopotamia. It was the orderly succession of seasons, with sunshine following rainfall, the fertility produced by silt deposits of the two rivers, the Indus and the Great Mihran, the facility of irrigation and transport, and the rich variety of animals that were domesticated, that initiated the development of early farming culture in the Indus valley. The Indus valley culture, unearthed as the result of a happy archaeological discovery at a site known as Mohenjo-Daro (Place of the Dead) by R. D. Banerji, goes back to about 3,000 B.C. That this was a key position on the great river is shown by the building of the Lloyd Barrage at Sukkur in its neighbourhood. Many other "dead cities" lie buried under the sands, deserted by one deltaic channel or other of the river at some time in the past. Once the Indus flowed eastward, near the barrage, to discharge itself into the Rann of Cutch. Perhaps the present western course is connected with the drying up of the Hokra and the eastern Nara, which again is linked with the eastering of the Jamuna that had once flowed into the Hokra. Wheat and barley were found at Mohenjo-Daro almost contemporaneously with Egypt and Mesopotamia. The Indus valley was a very important,

if not the exclusive centre for the domestication of the buffalo, sheep, cattle, elephant, pig, goat, camel, cat and dog. Thus a hundred cities (of which two large and thirty-five small ones have been unearthed so far), with their "autumnal" forts mentioned in the *Rg-Veda* as refuges against inundations, grew up in the Indus-Mihran doab, like the cities of Sumer, representing a complex and brilliant development of ancient agriculture, craft and trade that depended like Mesopotamia upon the annual inundation of the river. Between Sukkur (near the ancient site of Mohenjo-Daro) and Kotri, the Indus traversed a hard limestone tract and hardly meandered, giving the best benefits of its dependable flood and flush irrigation. Elsewhere the meandering of the rivers caused disastrous floods from which many cities on the banks of the Indus, the Ravi and the Sutlej suffered. Throughout the entire region from the Himalayan valley to Southern Baluchistan the monsoon was much heavier and more equable than at present; the forests were more abundant, supplying the wood burnt for millions of bricks for the cities; and the land was moister and more fertile, growing bread-wheat, rice, barley, sesamum, pea, rye and cotton. Spreading over an area covering a thousand miles from the foot of the Simla hills to the Arabian Sea, the Indus valley civilization exhibits a diverse series of cultures, which, according to the archaeologists, Wheeler and Mackay, date back to the Stone Age (perhaps the fifth millennium B.C.) and extend through the so-called Copper or Chalcolithic Age (approximately the fourth millennium) into the Bronze Age of the third millennium and later.

Its Maritime and Commercial Character

The Indus civilization had contacts both by land and sea with the Sumerian and Akkadian civilization in Mesopotamia. A hair-pin with a double spiral head found at Chanhudaro resembles pins found on islands of the Aegean Sea. Two seals of the Mohenjo-Daro type have also been found in Elam and Mesopotamia; while a cuneiform inscription of the Euphrates valley has also been discovered at Mohenjo-Daro. The Indian seals found at Sumer belonged mainly to the Akkadian level (2370 B.C.); but a few also were found in pre-Akkadian and post-Akkadian strata. Archaeologists on the basis of the study of pottery in the different layers of the ruins and other evidences consider that

Quetta, Amri and Zhob preceded the civilization of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa. Nal, Shahi Tump, Jhukar and Jhangar were later cultures of the Indus valley. The skilfully fabricated steatite seals, with representations of animals and pictographic writings, are believed to have been used in connection with trade, the seal-cutter having reached almost its perfection. That these seals might have been used for commerce is inferred from the fact, stressed by Hutton, that cotton fabric bearing a seal impressed with an Indus valley stamp has been discovered from a pre-historic site in Iraq. The writings on the seals remain yet undeciphered. It is suggested that the ideograms on the seals represent descriptions of commodities packed in bales which were protected by clay labels bearing imprints of the seals, or names of the traders or guilds; or again these may have a religious significance. F. Horzny puts forward the claim to have interpreted the hieroglyphic seals of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa which have some signs in common with the Hittite hieroglyphics. The seals contain the names of the owner and usually mean seal of—followed by the person's name. Thus the Indus valley people, according to him, belong to the Indo-European Hittite group of people. The Reverend Father Heras thinks that they are Dravidians and has found some clues to the interpretation of the seals. There is also an elaborate system of weights and measures that denotes an advanced stage of industry and commerce. One of the seal-amulets shows a galley or ship that must have been used on the Indus or on the open sea. The Indus valley cities and towns spread from the foot of the Simla hills to the Arabian Sea, covering more than a thousand miles—an area certainly larger than that of the contemporary civilizations of Mesopotamia and Egypt, and had continuous trade contacts with the countries of Western Asia and Egypt and with other parts of India, exchanging luxury goods, copper and other metals, and precious stones for clothes and surplus agricultural produce.

Long before the discovery of the Indus civilization Sayce pointed out that the appearance of the word Sindhu for muslin in a Babylonian list of textile goods definitely indicates trade connections between Babylon and the Indus valley as early as 3000 B.C. The distribution of pottery indicates that the trade route lay through near Karachi, where the Hab was crossed, and the coastal region through the Makran and Las Bela, Mehi,

Sutkagen-dor and the Mula pass. This route was chosen by Alexander of Macedon during his return journey from India after his famous invasion, on the precedents of the previous conquerors, Semiramis and Cyrus, and later on by Arab merchants trading with India. Baluchistan and the Indus region had a much heavier rainfall and population in ancient days than at present. The eastward shift of the south-western monsoon that formerly drenched Persia, Baluchistan, Afghanistan and the Indus basin was gradual, and became marked probably in the middle of this millennium. Gold came to the Indus valley craftsmen for making ornaments from Kolar and Anantapur in South India. According to Mackay: "Stags' horns were brought to the Indus cities from Kashmir; semi-precious amazon-stone came from the latter place or from the far-off Nilgiri hills; jadeite, as Sir Edwin Pascoe suggests, points to communications with Central Asia, and gold with Southern India. Mysore supplied a beautiful green stone of which a cup was found at Mohenjo-Daro; and lapis-lazuli and perhaps a lead-ore, containing silver, were brought from the further regions of Afghanistan." The picture revealed is that of a constant movement of caravans and pack-horses carrying muslins, luxury goods and precious metals and stones between Mesopotamia, Iran and India. This would include the movement of gold, amethyst and amazon-stone from Mysore and the Deccan through the Western Ghats across the Palghat gap to Kathiawar, and thence to Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa; the transport of forest produce, timber, cotton and cereals by river craft down the Jhelum, Ravi, Chenab and Sutlej to the Indus delta; the import of silver, tin, lead and bronze from Persia and Afghanistan; and the export of cloth and surplus agricultural produce, including cotton (called Sindhu by the Babylonians) from Las Bela across Makran and from the deltaic ports by sea up the Persian Gulf to Sumer and Akkad. The foreign trade was lucrative enough to encourage the establishment in Sumer of colonies of merchants from the cities of the Indus valley dealing especially in Indian muslins and art wares. From Harappa on the Ravi, the cities of Bahawalpur on the Sarasvati and Mohenjo-Daro on the Indus to the trade-towns of Mehri, Dabbar Kot and Sutkagen-dor in Baluchistan and Rangpur in Kathiawar and beyond the boundaries of India to Ur, Lagash and Anau, industrial and commercial prosperity was

writ large on the face of the Indus culture with its uniform commercial code and script and an elaborate system of trade-seals, weights and measures.

Social and Political Structure

The Indus culture shows a careful town-planning with sewage and drainage channels, wells and public swimming and hot-air baths for the common people; while the absence of temples suggests that there was no priestly class as in Mesopotamia and Egypt. Palaces and tombs found in the latter also did not exist in the Indus valley or were indistinguishable from private houses. Strongly fortified citadels have been discovered, however, at Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro. These indicate both strong, centralised administration and military precaution against attacks, probably from the fierce R̥g-Vedic Aryan tribes who wore coats of mail and rode on horses, which the people of the Indus culture did not probably possess. In Harappa we find remains of workmen's dwellings built in serried ranks together with working floors and granaries under the protection of the citadel. Commodious granaries or storehouses which constitute arrays of long halls, supported on massive plinths of burnt brick and provided with ventilating passages beneath their timber floors, have been discovered at both Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro. These were obviously State granaries that, in the age when all taxes were paid in grains, were scattered throughout the land. Brick architecture was one of the chief glories and gifts of the Indus civilization. The house of the average citizen on the banks of the Indus was as well built and comfortable as that in modern civilization. It was from the Indus valley that the elegantly built domestic structure spread to the cities of Mesopotamia. The bigger size of the cities of Mohenjo-Daro and Harappa, as compared with the other thirty-five small towns and villages that have been discovered, as well as the perfection of city design under the direction of expert engineers and architects suggest imperialist centralisation. The latter might have been the outcome of a defensive scheme against the Aryan invaders, and could be easily evolved in the valley due to the easy river transport. The need of security both against military raid and devastating flood is, no doubt, writ large in the city planning in the Indus valley. Violence and slaughter are suggested by the

discovery of groups of skeletons of men, women and children, with contorted limbs in a large room and at the foot of a staircase at Mohenjo-Daro. Some archaeologists like Wheeler find a complete resemblance between the organisation and lay-out of the cities of the Indus valley and those of Ur or Lagash, with priest-kings or autocratic priesthoods in temple-citadels forming the strong-holds of centralised government on a feudal basis, and surrounded under their protective surveillance by the serried lines of workmen's barracks and work-places. Piggot even speaks of regimented slave-labour in connection with his description of what he characterises as the dreary 'coolie-lines', the great State granaries and the municipal flour-mills, and of one United Indus kingdom with Harappa and Mohenjo-Daro as its northern and southern capitals respectively. The dominance of a priestly-royal organisation, as in the case of the other ancient riparian civilization, cannot, however, be inferred on the basis of existing evidence. The whole matter is as obscure as the pictographic writing which is yet to be deciphered.

Sculpture in the Indus valley shows a high degree of finish and excellence, while a bronze figurine of a dancing girl is a most superb specimen of ancient world art. The human statuary throws light upon the physical, anthropological characteristics—flat cheek bones and noses, low foreheads and narrow eyes, obvious non-Aryan features. Gold, silver, ivory and precious stones used in elaborate ornaments for both sexes, domestic utensils including drinking cups, incised polychrome and glazed pottery, fine fabrics of wool and cotton, artistic terracotta toys for children, and the elaborate coiffure of both men and women, all testify to the development of a highly sophisticated culture.

Contributions of the Indus Civilizations to Indian Religion

The Indus valley culture has contributed certain permanent elements to Indian civilization. There is, first, the worship of the primordial Mother Goddess (bedecked with jewellery), as in Asia Minor and Crete, along with phallus worship (as evidenced by the discovery of a large number of phalli and ring-stones), from which stemmed in India the worship of Śakti in the later centuries. One of the Harappa seals shows the Goddess as nude and upside down with the lotus plant issuing from her navel. This is the prototype of the Earth-goddess Prithvī, Āditi, or

Śrī-mā of the Vedic Aryans, and of Śrī-Lakshmī, Gaja-Lakshmī and Yakshī that we come across in Bharhut, Sanchi and Orissa caves. The Harappa Mother Goddess seems to have been propitiated by human sacrifice that is portrayed on the obverse of the seal; while another figure, standing amongst the branches of a pipal tree, appears to be the prototype of the later tree-nymph, Yakshī or Vrikshakā. In a railing pillar from Bharhut (in the Allahabad Municipal Museum) we see a Yakshī from whose navel issues forth a lotus stalk. The navel is the seat of all vegetative fertility in ancient Indian myth and art. The earliest Indo-Aryan Mother Goddesses, Śrī and Lakshmī—Beauty and Abundance—described as the twin mistresses of man that we come across in early Indian art have therefore obvious filiations with the Indus valley Mother Goddess that was worshipped for a whole millennium in that region and must have influenced the rise of the Mother cult also in the Ganges valley. This is evidenced by the discovery of ring-stones of hametite from Rajghat, Bhita, Ahichchhatra, Kosam, Mathurā and Pāṭaliputra—all showing a mother deity with alternating tree and animal motifs. The cylindrical seal from Rajghat is of special interest as it represents a bull with a crib in front, similar to the unicorn and crib of the Indus valley. Certain terracottas found in the old North-Western Frontier Province, in Attock in the Punjab and in Kosam in Allahabad, have been compared with the sculptures of Bharhut, Sanchi and Bodh-Gayā. The female religious figures seem to belong to several types, viz., the Universal Mother or Isis type, the Divine Woman or Ishtar and Yakshiṇī type and the personified Yoni or Baubo type. Besides there were also secular figures. These figurines, whether religious or secular, bequeathed by Indus valley and Maurya ages throw a flood of light on the development of ancient Indian religion and sculpture. The Maurya terracotta female figurines unearthed in Northern India from Taxila to Pāṭaliputra especially recall the Harappa Universal Mother type, with exaggerated breasts and hips. There is also a nude god in the posture of meditation with three faces, a pair of horns crossing his head, a fan-shaped head-gear or piled up matted lock, and several animals round him. This is believed to be the prototype of Śiva-Paśupati or Śiva as Lord of the Animals. Śiva is three faced (Tryambaka) in Aryan legend and sculpture. The Mohenjo-Daro figure is three faced,

while its triple horn anticipates the triśūla, and its legs bent double in the padmāsana posture recall the Supreme Yogi. Another figure represents the god as the archer, the prototype of the later Śiva-Kirāta, the deity of the hunting folks. In the Śiva images of the Pallavas in the south, the Mohenjo-Daro pair of horns is met with. The crescent moon on the Purāṇic Śiva's forehead is probably connected with the pair of horns, as in some other ancient cults of Sumer and Babylonia where these denote the deity. It is also noteworthy that the upraised phallus in the Mohenjo-Daro representation is the usual manner in which Śiva as well as Śiva's incarnation, Lakuliśa, were represented in the middle ages in Western and Eastern India. Many figures of clay, obviously representing male deities, have been found at Mohenjo-Daro, which are entirely nude and also wear horns on the head. These may be the Śisna-devāḥ of the R̥g-Veda, meaning nude gods (gods possessing śisna) of the enemies of the Indo-Aryans. All these male nude figures stand erect. Some standing deities on seals also show the bull in the foreground. Now in the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas, Śiva is described as completely nude and also as Ūrdhva-liṅga and Sthira-liṅga and the god and the liṅga become identical. The Vāmana Purāṇa describes four sects of Śiva worshippers, viz., those who revere the liṅgam, Paśupati, Mahākāla and the Kapilas. The cults of the liṅgam and Paśupati probably originated in the culture of the Indus valley. A four-armed figure, occurring among the signs of the Indus script, anticipates the four-armed Śiva of the Hindu pantheon. A copper sealing representing a Yogin, with two devotees on the two sides and coiled serpents facing, shows another distinct feature of Śiva, who in Aryan tradition wears serpents. The Harappa image, called the Dancer, also strongly suggests Śiva-Naṭarāja as the Mohenjo-Daro figure suggests Śiva-Paśupati.

The cult of the Vrātyas, referred to in the Atharva-Veda (15th kāṇḍa) as non-sacrificers and worshippers of Eka-vrātya (the Supreme Being, prototype of Śiva), with his associate the Puṁśchali, and wearing woollen apparel and sheep-skins, wielding bows and lances and practising neither agriculture nor trade, seems to belong to the Mohenjo-Daro civilization and was once widespread in India among her indigenous peoples, necessitating Aryan conversion through the Vrātya-stoma ceremony, by performing which groups of Vrātyas became eligible for social inter-

course with the Āryas and ceased to be Vrātyas, as Kātyāyana observed. It is the aboriginal folks, the non-sacrificing Vrātyas, regarded in the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas as outcastes, vagrants and mixed peoples, who perhaps have given to the country the universal institution of Vrata or religious ritual or vow, as mentioned by Āpastamba. It was probably in the Gupta period that the social absorption of the Vrātyas and introduction of the Vrata rites into Brahmanism were completed.

The people of the Indus valley as well as the Vrātyas were worshippers of the liṅgam, the generative male energy of the universe, symbolic of Śiva. Both the male symbol of the liṅgam and its counterpart, the primordial nude goddess with lotus in her hair, are found at Mohenjo-Daro, embodying two main currents of worship and ritual of later India. Similarly the huge tank found in the centre of the city of Mohenjo-Daro is probably the prototype of the holy bathing tanks of Hinduism of the later ages.

Finally, there is evidence in the Indus valley of the worship of spirits of trees and animals which gave rise to later Apsarā, Nāga and Yaksha cults. The aśvattha and neem are among the sacred trees in the Indus valley, and in one seal-amulet the deity presiding over such trees is actually represented as a horned goddess. Another horned deity makes obeisance to her, while behind him is a goat with a human face. The bull, the tiger, the buffalo and the goat are all sacred animals (probably vāhanas or vehicles of deities) with a food-vessel or altar usually represented before them in the seal-amulets. The snake also seems to have been an object of veneration. The cults of the Mother Goddess, of the three-faced Lord of Animals, of the yoni and liṅga, of the powerful bull and snake, of the fig tree and of the streams have all come down from the religion of the ancient Indus plains. The Atharva-Veda definitely mentions the cults of the aśvattha tree, the serpent and Eka-vrātya, and gives an account of a variety of magic and sorcery—all of non-Aryan origin and significance.

Inter-relations between the Indus and Sarasvati Cultures

Descriptions in the Rg-Veda of the Asuras, Dāsas or Dasyus as people of dark blood (kṛṣṇa-garbha), snub-nosed (anāsa), of strange hostile speech (drogha-vāchah, mṛdhravāk), not following rituals

and sacrifices (akarman, ayajvan) and worshipping the phallus (śisnadevāḥ) and stupid gods (mūradevāḥ) refer to the Indus valley inhabitants. Mention is also made of their towns and forts, a hundred in number, of their autumnal fortifications as refuges against inundations of rivers and of their knowledge of iron (ayas) and the arts of spinning and weaving. There is also mention of the Matsyas or the Minas (who participated in the battle of the Ten Kings), Śimiyus, Kikaṭas, Ajas, Yakshus, Chumuri, Pipru, Varchin and Śambara. There had been chronic conflicts between the Indus and Sarasvati civilizations. The Vedic Aryan God-king, Indra, obtained the designation of the Sacker of Cities (Purandara) and subjugated the non-Aryans by the aid especially of the horse as the war animal and of the sword and the battle chariot. The civilization of the Indus was more widespread and deep-rooted than the contemporary, less extensive, sister civilization of the Sarasvati. Its worship of the Mother Goddess and Śiva, and of the sex-organs, liṅgam and yoni, as contrasted with the Vedic Aryan deities of Indra, Varuṇa and all the rest materially enriched the Indo-Aryan religious beliefs and practices. The ubiquitous worship of the sexual principle, of the phallus and Mother Goddess, of trees, serpents and animals, yoga exercise as well as faith in charms and amulets, all came from the Indus people. The use of cloth in apparel, handloom weaving, the form of the ox-cart, the domestication of many animals, including the elephant, many tools of arts and crafts, the glyptic art as well as the pattern of city and village planning were also among their precious gifts to Indian civilization. They were a peaceful, commercial people having their big cities mostly undefended by walls and fortifications and possessing but a poor equipment of arms and weapons that could be of no avail against those of war-like neighbours, such as the Rg-Vedic Aryans. The constant invasions and attacks of the Aryans, the incursions of the Mediterranean race, coming by the pre-historic Makran route, as indicated by the recent discovery of forts to the west of the Indus river, the recurrence of drought and flood, the change in the courses of the Indus and the Mihran due to forest destruction (the cities demanding fuel for the use of burnt brick), the decline of fertility and desiccation (as evidenced by the disappearance from the region of such ancient wet-region animals as the elephant, rhinoceros, tiger and buffalo) are probably

responsible for the decay and final ruin of the Indus valley civilization. Archaeologists generally affirm that the Indus civilization reached its zenith round about 3000 B.C., was progressively declining during the latter half of the second millennium, and was finally eclipsed, probably at the hands of the invading Aryans, according to Sir John Marshall, not long after 2000 B.C. A definitely alien culture represented by Cemetery H burials with their bright-red wares is superimposed upon the ruins of Harappa; while at Chanhudaro two distinct cultures, viz. Jhukar and Jhangar, overlaid in succession the Harappa culture. It is suggested by Childe that the Cemetery H culture superimposed upon the latest levels of the Mohenjo-daro-Harappa culture belongs to the Aryan invaders. Such is the obscure story of the rise and fall of the earliest civilization of India extending over a vast region from the East Punjab to Southern Baluchistan and Kathiawar revealed by mounds and debris, seals and terracottas.

Did the Indus valley culture, apart from its bloody contacts with the R̥g-Vedic Aryans, remain isolated from the currents of culture of the Ganges basin? Evidence is not so sufficient. Along the dead course of the ancient R̥g-Vedic river, the Sarasvatī, now the dry bed of the Ghaggar in Bahawalpur and Bikaner, certain Harappa settlements have been recently discovered, obviously pointing to the close proximity between Harappa and R̥g-Vedic cultures. A chalcolithic city of the third millennium B.C. has been discovered in the eastern part of the Ganges valley near Patna at Buxar at a site 52 feet below the earth's surface and 13 feet below the Mauryan strata. Two types of terracottas have been found: crude, showing affinity with Sumer and the Indus valley, and delicate and finished, comparable with the pre-Sumerian Enidū and the Aegean. The figurines of the Mother Goddess are in particular similar to those from Mohenjo-daro and Crete. The universality of the cults of the Universal Mother and Rudra-Śiva points to the Harappa heritage. Hence, near the first home-land of the Aryans in India and almost covering the track of their expansion towards the east, at the close of the Harappa Age, the Harappa people, for whom they might have employed the ancient imagery of the Dasyus, Asuras and "ruddy" Piśāchas and Rākshasas, came into both sanguinary and peaceful contact

with them across forgotten centuries. Both archaeology and early history must now endeavour to forge the missing links between the Harappa civilization and Indo-Aryan civilization. A rich and hitherto neglected field lies open especially for the explorers of the valleys and dry-beds of such ancient rivers as the Sutlej, Sarasvati, Drishadvati and Ganges in their upper courses.

Social anthropologists can point to several clear evidences of the extension of the Indus valley civilization to the Madhyadesa and the Ganges valley. Indian culture in the millenniums B.C. was a part of a vast ancient, pulsating current of civilization, extending from the Levant to the Ganges with a common stock of cults of the sun and the fire, of the bull and the snake, the phallus and the Mother Goddess, symbols, art motifs and material inventions and discoveries in which Egypt, Sumer and the Indus valley alternately participated in the different epochs. H. C. Ray Chaudhuri traces a close parallelism between Rudra-Śiva of India and Teshub, the chief male deity worshipped by the ancient Hittites in Western Asia in the second millennium B.C. Teshub rides a bull and holds a trident and mace like Śiva. His consort is the Mother Goddess, the Mā of Cappadocia. She rides a lioness or panther like the spouse of Śiva (Simhavāhini). There is also a curious similarity between Nanania and Artemis of Ephesus and Susa having the bee for her symbol like the Brahmāri form of the Mother Goddess in India. Similarly, megalithic monuments and marriage customs, not unsuggestive of Babylon, and of fertility rites which are Phaphian, all seem to indicate the infiltration into the broader plains of the Ganges of the social and economic order associated with the culture of the Indus that in its turn looks for its origins to a common racial and cultural background, Mediterranean and Armenoid.

It is the great Mediterranean race (the Dāsas and Dasyus of the Vedic Age), speaking the Dravidian languages, that coming in wave after wave of migration before the advent of the Indo-Aryans introduced a high civilization into India. Their wheat-farming, domestication of animals, handicrafts and luxury industries, weaving, city development and architecture, navigation and commerce greatly impressed the Aryans who had never known urban life. Dravidian place-names are found in Mesopotamia, and the Brahuīs of Baluchistan use a Dravidian language.

The numerous megaliths of the Deccan, related to metallic deposits, have a close resemblance with the analogous remains toward the Pacific on the one hand, and in Thrace and the Caspian Sea region on the other. Wheeler's recent surveys show that stone-axes and microliths occur almost exclusively to the south and east of a line from Cambay to Lucknow and that the principal focus of the megalithic culture was the Deccan, especially south of the Godāvārī river. According to Haimendorf the megalithic culture of North-eastern India has a South-east Asian rather than Western filiation. The land-route from Mesopotamia through Iran, Afghanistan and Baluchistan to India as well as the maritime route along the coast of the Persian Gulf and the Arabian Sea were probably used by the Dravidians and the occurrence of dolmens and kist-væns in Cochin indicates, as Gilbert Slater has pointed out, their use of the Palghat gap in the Western Ghats. The major Dravidian contributions to Indian civilization include rice agriculture and irrigation, domestication of the water-buffalo, use of iron, sea-fishing, spinning and weaving, mining and metal work. All these contributed towards a great increase of population, as is evident from the discovery of about a million pre-historic sites in the Deccan alone. The worship of the Mother Goddess and of a god like Śiva or Teshub links the Deccan civilization with that of the Near and Middle East. The incised marks on light pottery, discovered in the Hyderabad cairns, are identical with the symbols found in use in Minoan Crete; while a bronze statuette of the Mother Goddess discovered at Adi-chanallar corresponds to the clay figurines of the Mother Goddess found in large numbers at Mohenjodaro and worshipped extensively in the ancient civilized world from the Mediterranean to the shores of the Indian Ocean. Many scholars are of opinion that it is the same Dravidian peoples who had settled in South India that later on built up the Indus valley civilization which once extended from Seistan to the Ganges valley and from the foot-hills of Simla to Kathiawar and Rajputana. It seems probable, that a previous wave of migration of the Mediterranean race had reached the Deccan several centuries before the settlement on the banks of the Indus and the rise of the Sumerian civilization, and at least a millennium before the influx of the Indo-Aryans. Other scholars are of opinion that the megalithic culture of the Deccan is far removed

in time from that of Europe (about 2500 B.C. to 1500 B.C.) although the structural similarity between the monuments of the two regions, especially the port-holes cannot be doubted. More exploration and research can alone reveal the genesis and the date of the different types of megalithic monuments of South India, where megalithic culture continued right up to the middle of the first century A.D. There is a correlation between megalithism and mother-right, which indicates according to Ehrenfels that the former must have reached India not only in a series of cultural drifts but also from both the West and the East.

An earlier social stratum in India is represented by the great Proto-Australoid race (the Niṣādhas of the Vedic Aryans) speaking the Mundari languages, which spread from its original habitat in the eastern part of the Ganges valley to Further India, Indonesia and Polynesia. Its modern representatives in India are represented by the Santhals, Bhils, Mundas, Hos, Kurumbas and other tribal groups. The major contributions of the Munda-speaking peoples to Indian civilization include the village Panchayat system, the agrarian distribution under the scattered field system and the equalisation of agricultural and grazing rights in the village community, the organisation of watch and ward as well as the allotment of lands for village officials, artisans and servants, the reservation of plots of land for the worship of local godlings, the local jurisdiction of the assemblies of groups of five and ten to a hundred villages, and collective hunting, fasting and pūjā of tree and mountain spirits located in secluded village groves and reserved forest trees. There were also infiltrations in different ages of the Mongolians from Tibet and China through Annam and Burma and of the Melanesians from Indo-China. They are the Kirātas of the Vedic Aryans as mentioned in the Yajur-Veda and the Atharva-Veda, inhabitants of mountains and caves. They are described in the Mahābhārata as the forest-dwellers of the Himalayas and in the Vishṇu Purāṇa as the barbarians living to the east of Bhārata-varsha. On the evidence of Indian skulls Sewell and Guha establish that "it would seem probable that the Mediterranean stock had become established in Northern India at a period that clearly antedates the civilization at Nal and along the Indus Valley, and differences that have been shown to exist between the human remains at Anau, Kish and Nal indicate that a sufficient length of time had elapsed for certain

local variations to have become evolved and established". The civilization of the Indus plains was cosmopolitan as can be deduced from the investigations of the two anthropologists, according to whom no less than four different races can be identified in this region—the Proto-Australoid, Mediterranean, Mongolian and Alpine. Both racial stock and culture formed a vast continuous current that ebbed and flowed from the Mediterranean to the valleys of the Euphrates, the Tigris, the Indus, the Mihran, the Sarasvati and the Ganges well-nigh from the Stone Age.

CHAPTER V

THE VEDIC CIVILIZATION ON THE SARASVATĪ

The Home of the Aryas—the Sarasvati-Drishadvati Doab

Though the Indus (the Sindhu) gave the name to India, the ideological pattern of Indian civilization is derived from the culture of the R̥g-Vedic Aryans or Āryas, who gradually spread from Asia Minor and Iran over Afghanistan, the Punjab, the Ganges-Jamuna doab and the land watered by the Sarayū, the Varuṇā and the Sadānīrā (Gandak). The heart of this Aryan world was bounded on the west by the Sarasvatī and in the east by the Drishadvatī and the Apāyā (or Apāgā, a river in Kurukshetra, according to the Vāmana Purāṇa) and was called the Brahmāvarta. The Sarasvatī is a fragment of the great middle tertiary Indo-Brahm river, which once flowed into the Tethys Sea that withdrew after the first phase of the Himalayan upheaval. For millions of years the Sarasvatī, rising from the Himalayan range, collected the waters of Northern India and flowed south-west for discharge into the Gulf of Cutch independently of the Indus system. Vedic literature, indeed, describes the Sarasvatī, the Indus and the Sutej as flowing into the sea. (R̥g-Veda, vi, 61, 28, vii, 95, 2). The Mahābhārata also mentions Pravaṣa in the west as the goal of the Sarasvatī, the river's confluence with the sea being regarded as a most sacred place of pilgrimage. In Gujarat near Somnath there is a river called Rauṇākshī which is another name for the Sarasvatī, according to the Vāmana Purāṇa. It is called Prabhāsa-Sarasvatī and is identical with the Prācī-Sarasvatī or the Kurukshetra-Sarasvatī, which in ancient times flowed through Prabhāsa. The saṅgam of the Sarasvatī is in fact identified with the Kapilāśrama Siddhapur in Gujarat. The R̥g-Veda not only describes the Sarasvatī as a mighty river (maho-aṇṇaḥ) and the foremost river (nadītamā) and differentiates this river from the Sapta-Sindhu system, but also refers to the seven-fold Sarasvatī (Sarasvatī Saptathī)

mother of the rivers (Sindhumatā) or the seven-sistered river (Saptasvasā). In the Śukla Yajur-Veda, however, we have a reference to the five-fold river system of the Sarasvatī (Pañcha-srotaḥ Sarasvatī). In the Zendavesta there is a reference to Hapta-Hendu as a place of habitation of the Iranian Aryans. This is obviously Sapta-Sindhu—the land of the Seven Rivers, a phrase which occurs also in the Ṛg-Veda and which is the sacred home of the Indo-Aryans. The Mahābhārata, Śalya Parva, refers to seven branches of the Sarasvatī—Sapta-Sarasvatām—viz., the Suprabhā in Pushkar, Bimalodaka in the Himalayas, Sureṇu in Haridvāra, Oghavatī in Kurukshetra, Manoramā in Kośala, Bisālā in Gayā and Kāñchanākshī in Naimishāraṇya. Ancient India, where the Aryans were transformed into Indians, was not the Punjab but the Sapta-Sindhu, the Region of the Seven Rivers, viz., the Sarasvatī with its associated streams. The Ādiparva of the Mahābhārata lists the seven rivers as follows: Sarasvatī, Drishadvatī, Gaṅgā, Jamuna, Apāyā (Apāgā), Sarayū, Gomatī and Gaṇḍakī. Another list of the Seven Rivers is Irāvati (Ravi), Chandrabhāgā (Chenab), Vitastā (Jhelum), Vipāśā (Beas), Śutudri (Sutlej), Sindhu (Indus) and Sarasvatī. It is possible that the Sarayū (Haraju, modern Harirud), Gomatī (modern Gomal) and Gaṇḍakī (not identified) are rivers of Afghanistan and not the familiar Indian streams. On the whole the Seven Rivers (Sapta-Sindhu) should be either the seven streams of the Sarasvatī as mentioned in the Ṛg-Veda and the Śalya Parva of the Mahābhārata, or the five streams of the Sarasvatī referred to in the Atharva-Veda, together with the Ganges and the Jamuna. Between the Vedic and the Gupta epoch vast changes in the river-system, especially connected with the Sarasvatī, took place, making it difficult for the Epics and the Purāṇas to identify precisely the Sarasvatī and related rivers and the holy region of Brahmāvarta associated with the efflorescence of Ṛg-Vedic culture. Vātsyāyana in his Kāmasūtra refers to only six rivers of the Punjab—the Indus and its five tributaries, the Sarasvatī having disappeared by his time (3rd century A.D.). The entry of the Sarasvatī into the subterranean region is referred to by the Mahābhārata in one place—“Yatra Merupriṣṭhe Sarasvatī”. Both the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas roughly locate the Sarasvatī as the northern boundary and the Drishadvatī as the southern boundary of Kurukshetra (Sthānutirtha or Śthāneśvara), where the Bhāratas found their place together

with their old enemies, the Purus, within the heterogeneous ensemble of tribes called the Kurus or Kuru Pāñchālas.

The Sarasvatī identified with the Ghaggar, now lost in the sands of Rajputana, the Drishadvatī or the modern Chitrang and the Sindhu are the rivers mentioned most frequently in the Ṛg-Vedic hymns. (Excavations of selected sites on the banks of these two ancient rivers may reveal the essential features of early Aryan civilization just as those on the banks of the Indus brought to light a civilization that preceded the former by at least one millennium. Excavations at Hastināpura and other 'Mahābhārata' sites have already unearthed painted grey pottery dating back from 2000 B.C. to 300 B.C.). On the other hand the proximity of the Indus valley culture to the Ṛg-Vedic is indicated by the sites of Rupar in Ambala due north of Kurukshetra and of Saudhana-wala and about ten other places in Bahawalpur along the ancient course of the Sarasvatī (the dead beds of the Ghaggar and Hakra). The Ṛg-Veda mentions of course the five rivers of the Punjab, viz., the Vitastā (Jhelum), Aṣiknī (Chenab), Parushnī (Irāvati or Ravi), Vipāśā (Beas) and Śutudri (Sutlej). Beyond these on the east the rivers mentioned are the Gaṅgā, Jamuna, Gomatī and Sarayū, representing the eastern limits of Vedic culture, that had its focus in the region between the Sarasvatī and the Drishadvatī. The Bhāratas are described as settled in the region of the Sarasvatī, Apāyā and Drishadvatī and thence advancing to the Vipāśā and Śutudri. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa mentions the Sadānirā as a river situated between Videha and Kośala. This is identified with the Gandak and was the limit of the Aryan colonisation in the east at the time when Yājñavalkya composed the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. The famous river-hymn (nadi-stuti) in the Ṛg-Veda begins with Gaṅgā, Jamuna and Sarasvatī and the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa also refers to the Gaṅgā.

The modern Ganges appeared ages after the completion of the Himalayan upheaval as the severed part of the Indo-Brahm river and during early historical times captured the transversely running Sarasvatī which became the Jamuna. This river capture is indicated by the ancient tradition of the Sarasvatī losing herself in the nether world and her assumption of the name of Ghaggar for at least a part of her course. The earliest reference to the vanishing of the Sarasvatī is to be found in the Pāñchavimśa Brāhmaṇa (XXV, 10, 6). The Mahābhārata and the

Manusmṛti mention the disappearance of the Sarasvatī in the sands at Vināśana-tīrtha, near Sirsa (ancient Sarasvatī-nagara) in the Punjab. The Mahābhārata observes that after disappearance the Sarasvatī appears again at three places, viz., Chamāsodbheda, Sirodbheda and Nāgodbheda. Several hymns of the R̥g-Veda are reminiscent of upheavals of land and mountain and new courses of rivers carved out by Indra, who is said to split the mountains which tremble at his might.

The whole system of rivers connected with or related to the Sarasvatī, the Drishadvatī and the Śutudri (Sutlej) has been completely transformed. Within the period of history the Sarasvatī and the Ghaggar (or Gharghar which was the lower part of the Sarasvatī or its principal tributary) united with the Sutlej to form the great lost river of Northern India, called the Sotrā, Hokra or Wahindah, which separated Āryāvarta from the Indus valley. Much later the same river, which streamed through Bahawalpur and the Sind desert into the Indus, served as a political boundary of the Gurjara-Pratihāra Empire. It seems to have finally dried out of existence in the 18th century and its skeleton remains can still be traced in the sands from Bhatnair to the Indus.

The doab of the Sarasvatī and the Drishadvatī was much more important and holier in the Vedic Age than the Ganges-Jamuna doab. The doab of the Bharatas was, indeed, the stronghold of Aryan settlement, the seat *par excellence* of Vedic culture, "the land of the gods", as described by Manu. The Aitareya Brāhmaṇa sings the praises of Bharata. King Bharata performs the Rājasūya sacrifice. He offers gifts of many elephants in the region of Marsāna. In the region of Śuchiguṇa he introduces Agni, who is the priest of the Bharatas (Brāhmaṇa-bharata). On the banks of the Jamuna, he performs 78 Aśva-medha sacrifices, and on the banks of the Ganges, in a place called Bṛtraghna, he installs 55 sacrificial posts. The easterly doab of the Ganges and the Jamuna was settled later by the Indo-Aryan colonists, as is evident from the reference to the victories of Bharata Daushanti on these two rivers in both the Aitareya and Śatapatha Brāhmaṇas. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa contains also a myth referring to the spread of Brahmanical culture eastwards from the banks of the Sarasvatī in the west up to Videha across the Sadānirā. Kośala, Kāśī, Magadha and Videha

became gradually important seats of Vedic culture. Videha, under King Janaka and the sages Yājñavalkya, Śvetaketu, Udānka Śaulbāyana and Satyakāma Jābāla, was the eastern frontier of Vedic culture.

Their Original Home-land

The Aryan expansion began somewhere from Central Asia about the middle of the third millennium B.C. when a dry climatic period had set in. Bands of Aryans from the open grass-lands in Asia traversed westward and invaded the central European loess areas and the coasts of the North Sea. They were nomad horsemen and pastoralists and their most important contributions to the culture of Europe were the horse and the wheeled vehicle. The first historic invasions of Media, Elam, Syria and Babylonia from the steppes and elsewhere are placed from 1700 to 1500 B.C., produced by the southward swing of the climatic zones. It was also in the middle of the second millennium B.C. that the horse, the war-chariot and the sword brought the Aryan invaders from the steppe lands into the plains of the Indus and the Ganges. In India the mailed Aryan warriors (Varminah) riding on "bright prancing horses" encountered an old civilization based on both rural and urban life, and destroying cities and towns (acclaiming their chief war-god Indra as Purabhid, 'breaker of strongholds') and establishing castes and religious aristocracies, Aryanised it; while in Europe they could not lift the peoples out of savagery. The old civilization did not get so far ahead in Europe save round the Aegean Sea due to difficulties of climate and soil, of forest and marsh. North of the Aegean men for ages did not get beyond the state of living in villages. "There is a difference of nearly 4000 years between the age of the first cities of India and the Aegean on the one hand, and the age of the earliest cities of Europe further north", observes Fleure. Certain tablets of about 1400 B.C. discovered at Boghaz Koi, the capital of the ancient Hittites, and other places in Asia Minor contain references to kings who bore Aryan names and invoked the R̥g-Vedic gods, Indra, Mitra, Varuṇa and the two Nāsatyas. These gods are also mentioned in the Avesta as witness of a treaty. Scholars have concluded that these were the common gods of the undivided Aryans prior to their separation as R̥g-Vedic Aryans and Iranians. Certain inscriptions

in distant Anatolia mention Indra and other Vedic gods. There is reminiscence in the R̥g-Veda of an "ancient home-land" where Indra was worshipped by the fore-fathers of the Vedic hymn-singers. The connection of Indra with countries far distant from the land of the five tribes is also clearly indicated by some texts. Aryan place-names were used by the Kassites (about 1600 B.C.) who dwelt between Iran and Chaldea. Islands of Aryan speech "were thus scattered far and wide in the Euro-Asiatic plateau." It was through Iran that the R̥g-Vedic Aryans brought their culture and religion as well as their language into India in and after the fifteenth century B.C. Several Vedic scholars hold that certain R̥g-Vedic hymns, especially the sixth maṇḍala, were composed when the Aryans occupied parts of Iran and locate in this territory Divodāsa's conflict with the Paṇis identified with the Parnians of Strabo. They identify also the Dāsas with the Dahae, the Pārāvatas with the Parauti of Ptolemy and the Brishaya with the Brasacutus of Arrian in Arachosia. A few other tribal identifications may be mentioned: the Parsus are the Persians; the Pārthavas are the Parthians; the Mitajñu are the Mitānnī; the Kesis are the Kassī or Kassites and the Pakhthas are the Pakhthuns. It is clear that the region which the Tritsu family of the Bharata tribe occupied, after severe fighting with other tribal groups on the route to India, comprised Iran, Arachosia, Afghanistan and the Punjab, the Sapta-Sindhus or Sindhus. At least three tribes of Afghanistan specifically are mentioned in the R̥g-Veda: the Pakhthas, the Gāndhāras and the Mūjavants.

The Contest Between the Aryas and the Indus People

In the long march to the plains of the Indus there was bitter conflict between the Āryas and the Dāsas or Dasyus. There was also struggle between the Āryas and Āryas with the Dāsas as allies on both sides. The Dāsas or Dasyus are the Dahae of the Caspian steppe, and probably belonged to the Iranian group. "Ye smote and slew the Dāsas and Ārya enemies and protected Sudās with your succour, O Indra-Varuṇa." It is bemoaned that Indra killed Arṇa and Chitravatha on the yonder side of the Sarayū, although they were Āryas. The Bharatas who were the most famous among the Aryan clans were settled in the region of the Sarāsvatī, Apāyā and Drishadvatī. It is mentioned that their advance to the Vipāśā and Śutudri took place under Rishi

Viśvāmitra. They seem to have been led by the Tritsu branch under King Sudāsa, the hero of the battle of the Ten Kings (daśa-rājña) that was fought on the Paruṣṇī (Ravi). His grandfather Divodāsa fought the Paṇis, the Pārāvatas and the Brishayas, tribal groups located in Arachosia. It was under the leadership of the Bharatas that the first unified Indo-Aryan rāshṭra or state was built up with the various clans such as the Purus, Krivis, Turvaśas and Śrīñjayas, some of whom had fought with one another, completely integrated into a confederacy. The Bharata king was the supreme head and protector, receiving tribute (bali) from all. Thus the empire of the Bharatas, like the later empire of Darius, extended in the course of several centuries from Iran to the Punjab. In the Ṛg-Veda the abode of the demon Vṛtra is described as near the Sindhu (Indus). Indra, Vṛtrahan, killed Vṛtra and released the rain-clouds which then swelled the rivers. May it indicate that the monsoon clouds first drenched the enemy country—the Indus valley—before they crossed over to the Punjab inhabited by the Indo-Aryans, as they actually did in those times? Vṛtra (literally one who holds back the flow of waters in the skies and streams) is also described in the Vedic texts in the form of a snake which was an object of worship of the Indus valley people. May not Vṛtra, “the obstructor of rivers”, symbolise the control of the Dāsas over the river-system of the Punjab, which the Aryan war-lord, Indra, ends after a mighty struggle? Indra “sets free the rivers’ paths; all banks of the rivers yield to his manly might.” (Ṛg-Veda II, 13.) Thus the network of the Punjab water-courses was released for the benefit of the Indo-Aryan agricultural economy from the domination of the non-Aryan urban dwellers. Indra, whose “chariots of wrath the deep thunder clouds form”, who regulates the rain-clouds, streams and floods, and who liberating the waters after killing Vṛtra stands amidst the raging torrents firm like a mountain, is thus the giver of wealth for the Vedic Aryans. “The mighty roaring flood he stayed from flowing, and carried those who swam not safely over. They having crossed the stream attained to riches.” (Ṛg-Veda, II, 15.) The “golden treasure” which Indra brought to his people soon after their earlier invasion of the Punjab was the gift of the monsoons and rivers. Again, Indra “slaughtered Vala and burst apart the defences of the mountain: he tore away their deftly built defences”. May not these refer

to the Aryan destruction of the strongly built, massive embankments that protected the Indus valley cities so that the torrents swallowed up the enemy populations. There is in the R̥g-Veda a distinct reference to the Turvaśas whom Indra brought from a distant land, and who moved about the banks of the Paruṣṇī (Ravi), fighting on behalf of the local enemy people called the Vṛchīvants. The latter broke the sacrificial vessels and were annihilated. The Vṛchīvants and Turvaśas were given over by Indra, "the lord of bright prancing horses", to the Śrīñjayas led by a Pārthava or Parthian prince. The Vṛchīvants are further described as "located on the Hariyupia". The emperor Abhyavartin is king of Hariyūpīā and is called the Pārthava. He defeats the Vṛchīvants on the banks of the river Yavyāvatī and kills their commander Varasikha. The Yavyāvatī is the river Zhob, the tributary of the Gomāl (the Gomatī of the R̥g-Veda). Could Hariyūpīā be identified with Harappa (a modern name) as some scholars suggest? In that case the contest between the Indus and the R̥g-Vedic civilization and the resultant Parthian domination of the Indus valley are clearly indicated.

The March from the Sapta-Sarasvatī to the Sadanira

The course of expansion of Aryan culture is evidenced by the rivers mentioned during their migration and colonisation: first, the rivers of Afghanistan, viz., the Sarayū (Avestic Harayū, Hari Ruda), the Sarasvatī (Avestic Harahvāiti, later Arkhvati, Arghandab), the Kubhā (Kabul), the Krumu (Kurru), the Gomatī (Gomal) and the Suvāstu (Swat); second, the rivers of the Punjab, viz., the Sindhu (Indus), the Sushoma (Sohan), the Vitastā (Jhelum), the Asiknī (Chenab), the Marutvṛdha (Maruwardwan), the Paruṣṇī (Ravi), the Vipāśā (Beas) and the Śutudri (Sutlej); third, the Sarasvatī and the Drishadvatī (the Rakshī or the Chitang) whose doab, the home of the Bharatas, was later called "the firm middle land (Dhruva Madhyama dis)"; and finally the eastern rivers, the Jamuna, the Gaṅgā, the Sarayū, the Varānavatī and the Sadānirā (modern Gandak). Many rivers and streams were crossed by the Vedic Aryans as they spread themselves over the vast open plains. This is evident from the famous ancient R̥g-Vedic river-hymn: "O ye Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Sarasvatī, Śutudri and Paruṣṇī: receive ye my prayers: O ye Marutvṛdha, joined by Asiknī, Vitastā and Arijikiyā joined by Sushomā,

hear ye my prayers." The Sarayū marks the easternmost frontier of R̥g-Vedic and the Sadānīrā of later Vedic culture. Pargiter identifies the Sadānīrā with the Rāptī, and not with the Gandak. Beyond its ambit lay half Aryanised, half non-Aryan Magadha and Aṅga—"distant lands" according to the Atharva-Veda which associates the Māgadhas with the Vrātyas. From the banks of the Sarasvatī the Bharatas, "whose greatness neither the men before nor thereafter them attained", expanded to the east under the leadership of king Divodāsa and Sudāsa and the inspiration of the leaders or priest-kings Vaśiṣṭha and Viśvāmitra. They, crossed the Jamuna and carried on campaigns against the Dāsas, the Śūdras and the Kirātas, indigenous peoples of the eastern portion of the Ganges basin who were slowly and gradually displaced. One tradition refers to the advance of the Bharatas down the Ganges to Kāśī. The principal opposition in the R̥g-Veda is between the Āryas and the Dāsas or Dasyus. "Distinguish well between the Āryas and those who are Dasyus, devoid of sacred rites, chastising them subject them to the sacrificer." The Dāsas or Dasyus included the foreigners, such as the Dahae as well as Indian barbarians who were not acquainted with the Ārya rites. In the Atharva-Veda, the Āryas and the Śūdras came in for some similar contrast, the Śūdras denoting first an aboriginal tribe (Śūdra-abhirāma) and then, as Dr. Bhandarkar suggests, any people who had not adopted the essential feature of the Aryan Brahmanic culture, viz., the varṇāśrama-dharma. From the Sapta-Sarasvatī to the Sadānīrā was a long arduous march of the Vedic Aryans. Among their gods and goddesses were included Sarasvatī, who was at the beginning a river deity and was worshipped later as the Goddess of Wisdom. The Sarasvatī, the river of the Bharatas, is constantly mentioned in connection with Bhārati, the personified divine protective power of the Bharatas. The Bharatas and the land of the Drishadvati and the Sarasvatī (later on known as Kurukshetra), where they dwelt, themselves became sacred, as the God Agni and the Goddess Bhārati became their protectors. Agni Vaiśvānara travels eastward from the river Sarasvatī. Rivers cross his path but Agni burns on across all the streams. After Agni follow the Prince Videgha Māthava and the Brāhmaṇa Gotama Rāhūgaṇa. Thus they reach the river Sadānīrā, which, however, is not crossed. The Aryan expansion is vividly expressed in the following hymn of the

Atharva-Veda: "Let the country make for us wide room; let the country be spread out for us, be prosperous for us." There was also experienced a profound joy of living with the feast of life spread out for "hundred autumns" and more. "Let the wind waft sweet, the streams pour sweet for one that keeps to the righteous path. Let the plants be sweet to us. Sweet be the night, the dawn and the dust of the earth, and sweet be the father Heaven. May the lordly trees bring sweet, and sweet be the Sun. May the quarters of the earth be full of sweetness to us." Thus runs a famous hymn. The spread of the Aryans to the quarters of the earth was symbolically the extension of the suzerainty of Sarasvatī or Bhārati, the goddess of the Bharatas. The Aryans were nomadic in the Kṛta Yuga, we learn from a passage in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa. With each expansion of settlement and culture, the country of the Bharatas (Bhārati-saṁtiti) or Āryas covered successively the following regions in ever-widening ambits: Sapta-Sindhu, Brahmāvarta, Brahmarshi-deśa, Madhyadeśa, Āryāvarta and Jambu-dvīpa or Bhārata-varsha. Sumanta mentions: "Brahmāvarta is the holy land proper; next to it is Rishideśa (Brahmarshideśa); inferior to that is Madhyadeśa; and last is Āryāvarta." The holiest territory of the Aryans in the two centuries before and after Christ was singled out as Brahmāvarta lying between the Sarasvatī and Drishadvatī; the region next to it was Brahmarshideśa. The Mānava Dharma-śāstra, the Mahābhārata and the Purāṇas, all extolled the glory of the land which saw the rise of the Divine Society. But the age of the Imperial Guptas witnessed a more significant expansion of the geographical horizon of the land and culture than that associated with the shift of interest from Sapta-Sindhavaḥ to Brahmāvarta or Kurukshetra or Antarveda. Jambu-dvīpa was the island continent of which Bhārata-varsha was an integral unit. But after the establishment of the Mauryan Empire the continent was recognised to be within the sphere of Bhārata-varsha from the third century B.C. onwards. Bhārata-varsha or the land of Bharatas was the home-land of Aryan culture in the spacious golden age of Gupta imperialism embracing a large portion of the Asian continent, and including certain territories beyond the Himalayas in the north-west, inhabited by the Yavanas (Ionians or Greeks) and the islands of the Indian Ocean (Dvīpāntara Bhārata or Island India). Thus the denotation of India,

identified with the spiritual culture of the Āryas, changed through the epochs since Bhārata was the culture and the culture Bhārata.

The mention of a few other tribes in the R̥g-Veda roughly indicates the limits of expansion of Vedic culture: the Matsyas and the Chedis, who occupied modern Rajputana and Bundelkhand, and the Kirātas or the people of Magadha in the east. Thus Rajputana and Magadha came within the ambit of Vedic civilization. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa (about 900 B.C.) mentions the Aryans expanding to the east of the Sarasvatī and spreading beyond the Sadānirā or the Great Gaṇḍaka under Māthava, the Videgha, who carried Agni Vaiśvānara in his mouth. Agni is fire used for reclamation of virgin forests. The land east of the Sadānirā was called Videgha or Videha (North Bihar). Thus Videha was colonised and Aryanised. Beyond this region the territory was semi-Aryan or non-Aryan. Outside the zone of R̥g-Vedic culture lived the Āndhras, Puṇḍras, Śābaras, Pulindas and Mutibas, tribes mentioned in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa. Except the Puṇḍras, inhabitants of Eastern India, all these were inhabitants of the Deccan. We first come across a reference to the Vindhya mountains in the Kausitaki Upaniṣad (II, 8), the Narmadā having been reached by the R̥g-Vedic Aryans, while the Upaniṣads mention Bhārgava as the sage of Kuṇḍina, the capital of Vidarbha. Centuries passed before the R̥g-Vedic culture could establish itself successfully in the outlying zones to the east and the south. For the Baudhāyāna-dharmasūtra (about 400 B.C.) distinctly mentions that persons who visit the countries of the Puṇḍras, Vaṅgas, Kaṭīṅgas or Pranūnas shall have to undertake purificatory rites. Yet it was in Magadha and Puṇḍra that Buddhism and Jainism found a most favourable soil and were taught in a dialect derived from Vedic Sanskrit. Magadha, Kāśī, Kośala and Videha were the home of the Prāchyas, mentioned in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa and identified with the Prassi of the Greek writers. The Vaṅgas do not find a mention in the Brāhmaṇas.

The Permanent Gifts of the Vedic Culture: Kula, Grama and Sabha

The Vedic civilization gave to India the sense of integrity and sacredness of the patriarchal family (gṛha or kula) reared

on a decisively monogamic foundation, the notions of kula and gotra and endogamous and forbidden relationships, as well as the conceptions of varṇa and āśrama that have woven the social structure of India. The Indo-Aryan joint family (kula) with its head (kulapa), not despotic like the Roman pater familias but the offerer of the various sacraments (yajña), the leader of the family council and the executor of its laws, is the distinctive mark of Indian civilization. The laws of the kula have to be respected by the king. The kula comprises persons belonging to several generations living together in the same homestead (gr̥ha) and tending the fire of the same hearth (agniśālā). Several kulas constitute the gotra, traced to a common ancestor after whom it is designated. Varṇa in Vedic India designates the elite (varāṇyam) implying that culture and spiritual attribute or essence (rūpa-viśeṣam) went into the roots of the Indian social order rather than race or colour. The Ṛg-Veda says: "He destroyed the Dasyus and protected the Ārya varṇa." The Taittirīya Brāhmaṇa observes: "The Brāhmaṇa-varṇa is sprung from the Gods (Devas), the Śūdra from the Titans (Asuras)." The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa defines the scope of marriage relationship with relations of the third or the fourth degree. The Brahman and the Kshatriya could intermarry with the lower orders, including the Śūdra. In one of the Ṛg-Vedic hymns, we find the author observing: "I am a composer of hymns, my father is a physician, my mother grinds corn on a stone. We are all engaged in different occupations." The Śūdra class constantly obtained recruits by the entry of new aboriginal tribes mentioned variously as the Dāsas, Dasyus, Asuras, Nishādas and Piśāchas, but even these had the right to participate in the Vedic sacrifices and study the Vedas along with the four Varṇas, the Brāhmaṇas, the Kshatriyas, the Vaiśyas and the Śūdras. The Pañchajanāḥ or five people of the Vedic literature refer, according to the Nirukta (III, 8), to the four Varṇas and the Nishādas. The Taittirīya Saṁhitā definitely mentions the four Varṇas in order: "Put light in our Brāhmaṇas, put it in our Kings, put light in our Vaiśyas and Śūdras." "He created the Brāhmaṇa with Gāyatrī, the Rājanya with Trīstubha and the Vaiśya with Jagatī; but he did not create the Śūdra with any metre." (V, 7, 6, 3-4). Similarly the gods are classified into the hierarchy of the Brāhmaṇas, Kshatriyas, Vaiśyas and Śūdras. The Varṇas, viz., the Brāhmaṇas, the Kshatriyas

or Rājanyas, the Vaiśyas and the Śūdras were no doubt separate groups, but these had not as yet crystallised themselves into castes, the Vedic priests, warriors and kings easily exchanging their occupations, roles and statuses; while such ethnic groups like the Nishādas or Dasyus, outside the pale of the Vedic society, were gradually assimilated into it as the Śūdras. In Pāṇini, the Chāṇḍālas and Mritapas (the same as Pukkusas) seem to be included in the category of the Śūdras. "The Śūdra is toil", says the Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa. The symbol of the Śūdra Varṇa in Ṛg-Vedic religion is Pūshan, Earth, which, as the Bṛhadāraṇyaka puts it, "nourishes everything that is". The universe did not flourish under the regime of the great Ṛg-Vedic gods, such as Indra, Varuṇa, Rudra and Brahmā, until Pūshan emerged from the mother-earth and created and stabilised wealth and prosperity by toil and tillage.

The five people (Pañchajanāḥ) including the four Varṇas and the non-Aryan Nishāda group, according to Sāyana, were thus the inheritors of Ṛg-Vedic culture. The commonalty represented by the Vaiśyas and the Śūdras lived in the villages (grāmas) under the grāmanis who looked after civil and military affairs. The Vedic Aryan village set the pattern of the construction of the Indian village towns and cities through the ages. It was itself patterned on the cattle pen, and comprised a walled or fenced regular enclosure with long streets that crossed at right angles. At the intersection there was a public square where the shrine was constructed and the village council (sabhā) met. Lands were parcelled out to heads of families (kulapas) and cultivated in separate holdings (kshetras) carefully measured off. The holdings radiated in narrow strips from the village settlement and were held as family property. Strips of common land (khilyas) intervened between the family fields; while there were also common grazing grounds (goshtha) reserved for the cattle and sheep of the entire village. Irrigation from wells whence water was lifted by stone-pulleys and led through broad channels (sūrmī sushirā) was also developed. As many as ten cereals are mentioned in the Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad, and teams of six, eight or even twelve oxen for ploughing in the Ṛg-Veda. The sabhā of village elders had charge of economic management, defence, administration of justice, and all public matters. Village self-government has been a most important gift of the Vedic

civilization which described the assemblies, such as the sabhās and the samitis, as the twin daughters of god Prajāpati—the most ancient and ubiquitous agencies of Aryan democratic rule. A remarkable hymn of the R̥g-Veda is addressed to the deity called Samjana, or consensus, who is implored for the purposes of aggregation, co-operation and unity of minds and efforts. The Taittiriya definitely mentions the village judge (grāmya-vādin) and the maitrayāṇī, his sabhā or court, which was the custodian of the rights of the collective—the grāma, the vis and the jana. Arable lands (urvarā or kshetra) were owned by individuals of families (kulas), while the pasture lands were held in common (gavyam grāmaḥ, the clan seeking cattle). Irrigation channels (sūrmī sushirā) were also perhaps managed collectively. The village community was a most ancient and original institution of Indo-Aryan polity. From the grāma sabhā proclaiming (nādi) and shining with (tviṣi) justice to the bigger samiti of the class (vis) and the people (jana), which chooses the king, supports him in battle and dethrones him for tyranny, is a natural, democratic evolution. Vedic, like later, kingship in India is subdued by the voice of the people. The larger political formations met with in the Vedic age are the Rāshṭra and Vraja—kingdom and state.

The Heritage of Vedic Symbolism—Yajna and Atma-Vidya

But the living and undying contributions of Vedic culture to Indian ideology and values are its metaphysics and symbolism. The Brāhmaṇa literature clarifies and elaborates the Vedic rituals and ceremonies, including those connected with royalty, for the instruction of the priestly class. It is also concerned with myths and legends. The hymns came later than the rituals and are found in the Āraṇyakas and Upaniṣads. Under the impetus of discussions in an assembly of Rishis in the Naimisha forest or the influence of a great leader-king of the type of Aśoka and Kanishka of later ages, hymns, liturgies and poems, composed originally for single ceremonies and clans, were consolidated and co-ordinated and myth and symbol came to assume greater importance than rite and ceremony. "Most private" discussions among teachers, pupils, laymen and women gradually led to the evolution of the special myth and philosophy of the Upaniṣads. The Vedic myth of the creation of man, society and the four

functional groups in the spiritual hierarchy presents practically the values and ideals of life with compelling authority and universality. The Cosmic Person or Virāṭa Puruṣa, who was One in the beginning, multiplies Himself into His many children by supreme Sacrifice. As He creates mankind, He also creates the organic hierarchy of groups with their appropriate vocations, roles and duties. The latter are also called Sacrifices to be undertaken in this world as expiation by mortals. Through Sacrifice man, society and groups are created, and through Sacrifice again the mortals not only safeguard the fulfilment of their life goals but also assemble together the dismembered God and his multiplicity; for in essence God is One.

In the famous Puruṣa Sūkta of the R̥g-Veda we find three dominant metaphysical notions. First, the universe is created from and by the Universal Man (Puruṣa) who yet transcends it. Second, creation is not only the result of the supreme Sacrifice of the Lord of Creatures (Prajāpati) but is also maintained only by His recurrent Sacrifice recapitulated by mortals. Man by re-enacting the Divine Sacrifice in the form of worship or yajña, which embraces an infinite code of duties and obligations, can be emancipated and become immortal and at the same time can keep the universe on-going. "One who eats for himself eats sins only," says one of the Vedic hymns. Third, in all worship and yajña various deities such as Indra, Varuṇa, Mitra, Agni, Yama, Vāyu or Āditya may be invoked, but it is the One Supreme God who is really invoked. The R̥g-Veda interprets yajña in a comprehensive sense adapted to different stages or degrees of spiritual development achieved by man. For the highest yajña is by means of meditation, asceticism, pursuit of knowledge, self-control and detachment. For the ordinary man yajña is symbolic and "vicarious" offering to the Puruṣa, and the building of the fire-altar (agnīśālā) is the reconstruction of the universe in the form of the Puruṣa. Man, as he builds up the sacrificial altar with his elaborate and minute rituals and procedures, builds up his new, invisible, boneless and immortal body. The altar symbolises Prajāpati, Puruṣa, or the Cosmic Spirit. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa observes: "Thereby (i.e. by the building of an altar), the Prajāpati became immortal, and in like manner does the sacrifice become immortal by making that body (of the altar) immortal." Thus he conquers death and the fear of death. By

the yajña man obtains a new birth, becomes 'twice-born' in a divine society. A few lines from the famous Puruṣa Sūkta are given below:

A thousand heads hath Puruṣa, a thousand eyes, a thousand feet,
On every side pervading earth he fills a space ten fingers wide.
This Puruṣa is all that yet hath been and all that is to be,
The lord of immortality which waxes greater still by food.
When gods prepared the sacrifice with Puruṣa as their offering,
Its oil was spring, the holy gift was autumn; summer was the wood.
The Brāhmaṇa was his mouth, of both his arms was Rājanya made.
His thighs became the Vaiśyas, from his feet the Śūdra was produced.
The moon was gendered from his mind, and from his eyes the sun had birth.
Indra and Agni from his mouth were born, and Vāyu from his breath,
Forth from his navel came mid-air; the sky was fashioned from his head,
Earth from his feet, and from his ear the regions,
Thus they formed the worlds.

The Rg-Vedic hymn of Man has given India the theory and art of self-sacrifice as constituting the true worship of the Divine, the mimesis in each mortal creature of the Sacrifice of the Virāṭa Puruṣa in order that he may gain immortality. The entire range of human responses to the Deity from meditation, self-control and pursuit of higher knowledge to the offering of the goods of enjoyment to the senses was symbolised as sacrificial oblations to Fire, signifying the mystery of the primordial sacrifice of the Deity during creation. "Life itself is the great sacrifice where the Absolute (Brahman) is at once the sacrificer, the Fire where the sacrifice is offered, the material of the sacrifice, the Supreme Reality to whom sacrifice is offered, whom one attains by living his life as if it is Brahma-karma or an offering of all its fruits to Brahman in complete detachment."

The Yajur-Veda as well as the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa hold that man is born with three debts, debts to the ancestors, to the spiritual teachers and the gods, and that these he can discharge only by fatherhood, study and yajña. Man is enjoined in India to perform five Sacrifices or obligations for the maintenance and continuity of the cosmic and cultural symbiosis through the transmission of his triple heritage: first of the biological heritage by parenthood; second, of the spiritual heritage by the cultivation and advancement of learning; and, third, of the cosmic symbiotic heritage by love, care and devotion to the welfare of fellow-men and sentient creatures. The focus of all these sacrifices is the family altar (agniśālā) where burns the perennial sacred fire, the building of the altar being undertaken with meticulous propriety, symbolising the structure of the unity of the cosmos, the fire (Agni) being identified with the progenitor (Prajāpati) and man being identified with both Prajāpati and Agni. Prajāpati is also Death. Thus does man, "endowed with a luminous ethereal nature," by his Sacrifices become immortal. Ethically potent also is the Vedic conception of Ṛta and Satya, truth of thought and speech and moral norm or order and harmony in the cosmic, moral and religious sphere that binds gods, men and other creatures of the earth to the totality of Life through sacrifice and service. The eternal Law of Right and Reason (Ṛta) and the immutable Law of Karma, which are the directive and sustaining principles of the higher and the lower realms and which have played such important roles in Indian moral theory and practice, have their genesis in the Rg-Veda. The Vedic conceptions of Rta, Satya and Dhāta merged in the conception of Dharma which endures in the midst of change and is free from the incidents of ceremonial form, Karma or Vrata. Man seeks and achieves happiness and prosperity (preyas) through Karma (Sacrifices) and Dharma, and the everlasting goodness and immortality (śreyas) through knowledge (jñāna). The paths of preyas and śreyas intermingle as there is a unity of the inner and outer life.

Finally, the Vedic culture has also given to India the doctrine of metempsychosis or transmigration according to which true knowledge (vidyā) leads to the "Path of the Gods" or immortality, while worldliness leads to the "Path of the Fathers" associated with a cycle of births and deaths depending on Karma.

The doctrines of Sacrifice, Karma, transmigration, and deliverance from saṃsāra as well as ascetic discipline and chastity have furnished the firm foundations of Indian ethics; while the conception of the Absolute (Brahman) and of the identity of the Self and the Absolute (as in the famous formula "Tat Tvam Asi") has remained the central abiding notion in Indian metaphysics through the centuries. In the field of Indian art, the Vedic culture has provided the fundamental motifs and symbols such as the swastika, the lotus, the conch, the umbrella, the chakra, the sun, the nāga-garuḍa, the wish-fulfilling tree and the full vase that have been reproduced through successive ages. Such myths of Vedic origin as the combat between the Devas and Asuras, the incomprehensibility of Māyā or Creative Energy, the Supreme God asleep in the Cosmic Waters or the Great Serpent of the Universe have also supplied dominant symbols in Indian religion and art, defining and clarifying the cosmic process applicable to life, mind and the universe. The culture of the Sarasvatī or Bhārati is inseparable from the verities and values of Indian civilization.

CHAPTER VI

INTELLECTUAL AND SOCIAL REVOLUTIONS— BHĀGAVATISM, ĀJĪVIKISM AND JAINISM

The Upanisadic Protest against Ceremonialism and Priesthood

The seeds of religious protest and social revolution, ripening into broad, theistic or devotional and egalitarian movements, were sown as early as Vedic sacrifices, gifts, penances and fastings were entrenching themselves. This was inevitable as the rituals became exceedingly elaborate. Sometimes as many as about twenty major and minor priests presided, supervised and assisted in these ceremonies that became also very cruel and bloody, involving the slaughter of beasts, including young animals, on a stupendous scale. Several of the Upaniṣads vigorously emphasise the highest knowledge of the Ātman (parā-vidyā). The Muṇḍaka characterises persons who are devoted to sacrifices to gods and mere ceremonialism as foolish and deluded. "Unsafe boats are these sacrificial forms. Thinking sacrifice and merit is the chiefest thing, naught better do they know—deluded." The Chhāndogya states that the true equivalent of what is commonly called sacrifice (yajña) or the sacrificial victim (iṣṭa) or a protracted sacrifice (sattrāyaṇa) is really the chaste life of the Brahmachārī. The Bṛhadāraṇyaka enjoins that instead of a horse-sacrifice the universe should be conceived as a horse and meditated upon as such. The emphasis in the Upaniṣads came to be directed towards penance (tapas), reverence (śraddhā), truth (satya), chastity (Brahmacharya) and injunction (vidhi). The Aitareya Āraṇyaka asks: "To what end shall we repeat the Veda, to what end shall we sacrifice? For we sacrifice breath in speech or in breath speech." Thus the Upaniṣadic doctrine of identity of Self and the Absolute or Brahman, by which the seer knows himself as the All, was no mere metaphysical speculation but was actually a liberating, protestant gospel against ceremonial sacrifice.

The Shift of Leadership from the West to the East, from the Brahmans to the Kshatriyas

It is noteworthy that the protestant metaphysics was developed largely in the half-Brahmanised eastern territories of Magadha and Videha, while the home of orthodoxy was the Kuru-Pāñchāla country in the west. Intellectual ascendancy shifted from the west to the east, from the Brāhmaṇas of Kuru-Pāñchāla to the learned Kshatriya princes and seers of Magadha and Videha. One of the most prominent seats of later Vedic culture was the court of King Janaka of Videha, where it was that the famous seer Yājñavalkya defeated in philosophic disputations the various schools of western orthodoxy, gave a profound symbolic interpretation to sacrifices and rituals as against bloody animal offerings favoured in the west, and promulgated the new doctrine of Self and Brahman-knowledge, redefining yoga as the bringing together of the Universal and Individual Selves. Among the galaxy of Vedic seers and teachers, the lustre of Yājñavalkya's wisdom, versatility and practical common sense has remained undimmed through the ages. It is particularly from him that India has obtained the best clarification of the doctrines of the Universal Self, who is within all (Ātma-vidyā) and who is the subject of immediate perception or darśana, and of the Brahman as Pure Intelligence and Bliss manifesting itself in all phenomenal existences (Madhu-vidyā). Yājñavalkya's denial of deities and of ceremonialism and his uncompromising idealistic monism represent the acme and culmination of Vedic teaching.

Gradually, spiritual leadership passed from the hands of priests and sacrificers to the lay and Kshatriya section of the community and to munis, ascetics and wanderers of the forests (śramaṇas, charakas and parivrājakas). Among the great Kshatriya princes, to whom noted Brāhmaṇa scholars and theologians went for instruction, were Ajātaśatru of Kāśī, Aśvapati Kaikeya (who taught the Brāhmaṇas the mystery of the Universal or Vaiśvānara Self), Pravāhaṇa Jaivali (who was famed for his knowledge of the mystery of the syllable Om) and King Janaka of Videha, whose court became practically the centre of Aryan wisdom and culture in later Vedic times.

The Pre-eminence of Krishna—Vasudeva, the Founder of Bhāgavatism

The most distinguished Kshatriya seer was, however, Krishna, Devakī-putra, the disciple of Ghora Āngirasa, a priest of the Sun and worshipper of the Fire-god (Agni), who taught Krishna "so that he never thirsted again". It is probable that Krishna inherited the Dravidian religious tradition through his teacher Ghora Āngirasa, since Āngirasa Veda is connected in the Vedic literature with Ghora, i.e. some dark practice derived from the autochthones of the land. The Mahābhārata also mentions Krishna as having descended from Āngirasa and as a ritvij, adept in the Vedāṅga, and the scripture of Āngirasa as the noblest Śruti (VIII, 69, 85). From his master Krishna learnt a unique view of sacrificial offerings as well as of the nature of the Self as the Absolute. According to the Chhāndogya Upaniṣad, Ghora Āngirasa taught Krishna that the righteous conduct—the practice of the virtues of austerity, charity, uprightness, non-violence and truthfulness—was as efficacious as fees given to a sacrificing priest. The Upaniṣad observes: "When Ghora Āngirasa explained this to Krishna, the son of Devakī, he also mentioned that in the final hour one should take refuge in three thoughts: 'Thou art the eternal (akṣata), thou art the immovable (achyuta), thou art the very essence of life (prāṇa).'" Krishna's teaching in the Bhagavad Gītā (VIII, 9, 10) is similar, viz., that at the time of death one should meditate on "the Seer, the Ancient, the Ruler; Subtler than the Subtle, the Supporter of all, whose form is beyond conception, who is the One self-effulgent like the sun beyond darkness". Like his great preceptor, the sage Ghora Āngirasa who is called Krishna Āngirasa in the Kaushītaki Brāhmaṇa (xxx, 6), and is probably a composer of some hymns in the Rg-Veda, Krishna challenged Vedic ritualism and stressed the significance of the moral life, the cultivation of austerity, charity, non-injury and uprightness. The Dīgha-Nikāya, the Ambaṭṭha-Sutta, mentions Rishi-Krishna (Kanha). This is of great significance in Indian religious history since the particular section of the Dīgha-Nikāya considers the views of prominent non-Buddhist teachers and founders of sects. Vāsudeva seems to have been an accepted form of the Vedic god Viṣṇu at the close of the Vedic period. According to the Taittirīya Āraṇyaka, Nārāyaṇa,

Vāsudeva and Viṣṇu are three aspects of the same god. In the Mahābhārata we find the story that Paundraka pretended to be Purushottama or Viṣṇu and was known under the name of Vāsudeva. He came in conflict with and ultimate destruction at the hands of Krishna. It was the Sātvatas, an important branch of the Yādava race, who first recognised Krishna not merely as their tribal hero and leader (Sātvatām-varaḥ) but as the Supreme God, or the Sun whom he taught them to meditate upon. Vāsudeva-Krishna's identification with the Sun is clearly indicated in the Mahābhārata. Nārāyaṇa observes: "Being like the Sun, I cover the whole world with my rays, and I am also the sustainer of all beings and am hence called Vāsudeva." (XII, 341, 41) This is repeated in the Gītā (XIII, 18) and is an echo of the Upaniṣads where Krishna is taught to worship the Sun as the Supreme Light shining above all darkness. Thus Krishna came to be known as Vāsudeva-Krishna and his worshippers were called Pañcharātras or Bhāgavatas. The Epic observes: "The Pañcharātra is represented as an independent religion professed by the Sātvatas, and is also called the Sātvata religion; and Vasu Uparichara, who was a follower of that religion, is spoken of as worshipping the Supreme God according to the Sātvata manner which was revealed in the beginning by the Sun." Similarly the later Bhāgavata Purāṇa also indicates that Bhāgavatism represents the Sātvata rite in worshipping Vāsudeva: "The Sātvatas worship Brahman as Bhagavān and as Vāsudeva." A Kshatriya scholar and seer, Krishna thus was a historical personage who flourished about 1000 B.C., if we accept the Jain tradition of Krishna having preceded Pārśvanātha (817 B.C.), and who taught the Sātvatas the worship of the Sun and became later deified as Krishna-Vāsudeva, the radiant Lord of the Sky. As early as about 500 B.C. Pāṇini speaks of Vāsudevaka as a person who worships Vāsudeva—a general appellation of the Supreme Lord which was acquired by Krishna, the son of Vasudeva of the race of Vṛṣṇis. "Of the Vṛṣṇis I am Vāsudeva", says Krishna in the Bhagavad Gītā. Krishna worship is thus pretty old. The Mahābhārata also mentions Krishna as having undertaken long courses of penance in the Himalayas, abolished human sacrifice in Magadha and avenged insults to womanhood in the Kuru country. Krishna's opposition to the current Vedic religion is clearly indicated by certain passages that refer to Indra's defeat

and humiliation at his hands. He came to be known among the Sātvatas as Vāsudeva and as Bhagavān; while his more familiar appellations include Hari, Keśava, Govinda and Janārdana. In Patañjali (150 B.C.) we find Vāsudeva mentioned as Bhāgavat, the term used by himself for the object of his worship, meaning 'the Adorable'. Vāsudeva is no mere Kshatriya but the word is the name of God in Patañjali who also refers to the Vṛṣṇī tribe, to Baladeva, Satyabhāmā and Akrūra, and to the legend of Vāsudeva's killing of Kāṁsa being displayed in painted shows. Thus the main myth of Krishna religion, which we find elaborated later on in the Mahābhārata and Harivaṁśa, was quite popular by the second century B.C. Krishna-Vāsudeva's cult was called the Bhāgavata religion that according to the Mahābhārata has been traditionally handed down by Vivasvān to Manu and by Manu to Ikṣvāku. Vivasvān, Manu and Ikṣvāku are obviously Kshatriya philosopher-rulers of the ancient days, and these very names occur in the list of the spiritual preceptors of the Bhāgavatas or Pañcharātrikas. Vaiśampāyana, in the Śānti Parva of the Mahābhārata, mentions that "the duties of the ascetic class are told as well". The path of world flight, though discussed in the Gītā, does not correspond to the traditional teachings as handed down from Vivasvān, for the Gītā certainly prefers action. The "ancient wisdom" (yogaḥ purātana of the Gītā), the Bhāgavata religion, was also called Nārāyaṇīya Sātvata and Aikāntika (monotheistic), and India's most widely read scripture obtained the name of Bhagavad Gītā because it was taught to Arjuna by the Supreme Lord (Bhagavān) on the battle-field of Kurukshetra. The Gītā is also called in the Mahābhārata as Hari-gītā. The symbolic interpretation of sacrifices and the immanence of the Supreme Eternal Self in Life and Action, which we meet in Krishna's teacher Ghora Āngirasa, forestall the teaching of the Bhagavad Gītā; while the Nārāyaṇīya or Sātvata religion, promulgated by Vāsudeva's double, Rishi Nara-Nārāyaṇa, and described in the Nārāyaṇīya chapter of the Mahābhārata, is essentially the same as Krishna-Bhāgavatism. Elsewhere we find Nārāyaṇa identified with Krishna and Arjuna with Nara.

Krishna-Bhāgavatism was essentially moral and mystical, and focussed a protest not only against ceremonialism and priesthood but also against religious rationalism. It reconciled the worship of the Deity with the transcendence of the Absolute,

the Brahman or the Self as expounded in the Upaniṣads. The Mahābhārata repeatedly refers with respect to the Pañcharātra or Bhakti literature which deals with the worship of Krishna-Vishṇu as Nārāyaṇa and Puruṣa. Such worship must have become popular among the lay populations of the large states rather than among the Brāhmaṇa schools. The worship of the personal deity Krishna-Vishṇu-Puruṣa derived its invaluable support from the early Vedic conception of the deity, Vishṇu or Puruṣa. The later Upaniṣads from about 250 B.C. onwards preached the doctrine of Īśvara or Lord and of revelation vouchsafed to whomsoever the Lord chooses. The new theistic doctrine was preached by the Bhāgavatas or Vāsudevakas, named after Vāsudeva, who is Krishna himself and is later identified in an Āraṇyaka with Vishṇu and Nārāyaṇa and in the famous Besnagar inscription of the convert Heliodorus (the Greek envoy of King Antialkidas of Taxila) with the Supreme God, Devadeva Vishṇu. This was in the 2nd century B.C., when the cult of Vāsudeva and Saṁkarshaṇa (later considered as Krishna's brother) was mentioned as prevalent, especially in Central India and the Deccan.

The Social Turmoil and Rise of Asceticism in the East

Beyond the Madhyadeśa in the eastern Indo-Gangetic plain there was much social turmoil due to a series of wars between the numerous small republican states and kingdoms. The growth of the Magadha kingdom, with its capital first at Girivraja and then at Pāṭaliputra, was the result of much struggle, conquest and devastation. Bimbisāra extended the kingdom of Magadha by his conquest of Aṅga and his son Ajātaśatru waged successful wars against Kośala and Vaiśālī. The kingdom of Kośala completely disappeared from history a little later, absorbed by the new Empire of Magadha, while the great republican tribe of the Lichchhavis of North Bihar, with its capital at Vaiśālī, was forced into an alliance with Magadha. Mahāvīra and Buddha, Bimbisāra and Ajātaśatru of Magadha, Udayana of Kauśāmbī, and Prasenaḥjit of Kośala were either contemporaries or near contemporaries. In his own life-time Buddha saw the strenuous effort of Virūpāksha, the king of Kośala, to exterminate the Śākya, and soon after his death the city of Kapilavastu was sacked and the entire tribe wiped out. The eclipse of the

small republican states by the rising monarchies that were built on a large scale, represented a social transition with its harsh features of misfortune and disintegration which stimulated large-scale movements towards asceticism and penance. Asceticism is as old as Vedic religion. We have a reference to ascetics (*munis*), friends of Indra and of the gods generally, who are naked (*vātavasanā*) and show brownish dirt on their bodies, in the *R̥g-Veda* (X, 136, 2), and to the practice of begging by those *Brāhmaṇas* who have renounced the world in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka Upaniṣad* (III, 5, 11). *Sanyāsa* and *Pravajya* are associated with the search for the Supreme Spirit in the *Bṛhadāraṇyaka* and *Muṇḍaka Upaniṣads*. But the 6th century which was an era of turmoil and misery greatly stimulated asceticism and renunciation. The attitude of social despair and pessimism is expressed by the Jaina canon *Uttarādhyana*: "Happy we are, happy live we who call nothing our own; when *Mithilā* is on fire, nothing is burnt that belongs to me." The ascetic orders and brotherhoods multiplied and, wandering through the country, ranged themselves in strong opposition to the elaborate Brahmanical ceremonies and leaned towards new systems of philosophies. The *Arthaśāstra* refers to the *Sākya*s and *Ājivika*s as heretical sects and bans their entertainment. Many sects such as the *Achelakas*, the *Jatilakas*, the *Ājivika*s or *Śūdra-sanyāsis* under *Maskarī Gośālā*, the *Jains* or *Nirgranthas* under *Pārśvanātha* and the orders (*Jithakaras*) of *Pūraṇa Kassapa*, *Makkhali Gosāla*, *Ajita Kesakambali*, *Pakuddha Kachchāyana* and *Sañjaya Belatthiputta* arose, comprising individuals who prematurely renounced the world and practised penances (*tapas*) or cruel self-mortification.

Both *Mahāvira*, son of a *Lichchhavi* noble, and *Buddha*, son of a noble *Sākya*, belonged to a Tibeto-Mongolian stock of the Himalayan frontier and were regarded as degraded *Kshatriyas* by the *Brāhmaṇas*, and had natural hostility against the claims of the *Brāhmaṇas* to the monopoly of wisdom. Such hostility was both racial and philosophical. Especially repugnant to them were the cumbrous and irksome ritual sacrifices marked by cruelty, mechanical routine and pomp that totally obscured the goal of personal salvation. Many indeed were the ascetic schools and sects that sprang up in the 6th century B.C., but disappeared in course of time. Out of these only Jainism and Buddhism have now survived.

Resemblances and Differences between Jainism, Ajivikism and Buddhism

Both Jainism and Buddhism began as reform movements in the eastern part of the Ganges valley, where the majority of the population did not come under the influence of Brahmanical culture, and where Brahmanical teaching was corrupt and polytheism was thriving. The popular religion of the time was characterised by the Buddha as Deva-dharma, or worship of numerous devas or devatās according to the predilections of individuals. Undoubtedly no worship of images was in vogue among the Brāhmaṇa schools but the general population gradually took to image worship. Pāṇini (about 500 B.C.) refers to the images of Śiva and Skandha and possibly of Vāsudeva; while in Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra we find mention of the temples of Aparājītā, Apratihata, Jayanta, Vaijayanta, Śiva, Aśvins, Vāiśravaṇa, Lakshmī and Madirā (?). The Mauryas, according to Patañjali, established or manufactured images of gods (Śivakas) for worship in their greed for gold. Among the gods of worship, mentioned in the Buddhistic canon, the Niddesa (4th century B.C.), are Vāsudeva, Baladeva, Punnabhadda, Maṇibhadda, Aggi, Nāga, Suparṇa, Yakkha, Asura, Gandharva, Mahārāja, Chanda, Sūrya, Indra, Brahmā, Deva and Diśā. Both Mahāvīra and Buddha not only opposed image-worship but also re-interpreted the prevailing Upaniṣadic doctrines of the Brahman and the immanence of the Universal Self. They were equally dissatisfied with the doctrine that Perfection and Fullness belong to man, sense-bound, wayward and limited as he is. Both stressed a more strenuous search for the self. Mahāvīra (the Great Hero) or Jina (the Victor)—the name which Vardhamāna later adopted—was the head of the sect called the Nirgranthas (free from fetters). The Buddhists called him Nigantha Nātaputta (Nirgrantha Jñātriputraḥ). He saw man as Becoming and taught ways of Becoming, as the Buddha taught the four Noble Truths and the Noble Eight-fold Path. Unlike the Buddha, he did not wish man to renounce the world but to see him evolving, rising to perfection or complete release from bondage and physical existence (nirvāṇa or moksha) through the cultivation of strong will (mānas) and effort by concentration on penance (tapas). It is severe austerity that disciplines the will in effort so that man

becomes what he can become—the Kevalin who soars above the mundane world to āloka whence there is no return. Man is here neither absorbed into a Supreme Being as in Brahmanism, nor withdraws to nothingness as in Buddhism, but achieves a state of existence without relations, emotions and attributes. For ever freed from the burden of Karma, he shines in his righteousness, omniscience and perfection on the top of the universe. As he emancipates himself from thick, dead matter and achieves boundless insight, power and bliss, he exists as an independent, delivered soul among many others in the land called Siddhaśilā, whence he never comes back to this world. There he is resplendent for ages that never were begun and that never will close. “Omniscience, boundless vision, illimitable righteousness, infinite strength, perfect bliss, indestructibility, existence without form, a body that is neither light nor heavy, such are his characteristics.” Man in Jainism is the Supreme and the Perfect, the Conqueror (Jina), the Venerable (Arhat) and the Evangelist Founder of the Four Orders (Tīrthaṃkara).

Mahāvīra had many lay disciples from Vaiśālī and other neighbouring places who accepted the gospel of Becoming in their daily routine of life and business through ministration of the sick, care for animals and insects, almsgiving, hospitality and non-violence in every respect. The Buddha disapproved of austerity and prescribed the Middle Path, but the prophet of the Nigaṇṭhas believed in it as the mode of regulating mānas or effort for the goal of Becoming, of moulding the body-mind as the vehicle of Perfection. Austerity, according to Mahāvīra, annihilates karma, shuts out the influx of bad karma. Jainism believes in the Kriyāvāda, i.e. the doctrine that the soul acts or is affected by acts (karma). Brahmanism holds the same view but also insists that the karma acts through the instrumentality of the Divine; in Jainism the operation is automatic through the properties (pudgala) of matter. Buddhism adheres to the opposite doctrine of Akriyāvāda, teaching that a soul does not exist, or that it does not act or is unaffected by acts. With the Akriyāvāda are associated the Buddhist disapproval of self-mortification and commendation of righteous action by deed, by word and by thought. By austerity and meditation, according to Jainism, the soul, which is itself saṃsāra, becomes purified. In the Yoga of Jainism the control of the passions

and the achievement of universal friendship (*maitrī*), freedom from antipathy (*pramoda*), universal compassion (*karuṇā*) and indifference to human wickedness (*madhyastha*) go together. Meditation (*dhyāna*) and equableness (*samatva*) are equated. Thus the Jain discipline is somewhat different from the Hindu *Pātāñjala* Yoga and even from Buddhist *Jhāna* and Yoga. The Buddha used to meet Brahman *Parivrājakas* during his tours wherever he found an opportunity. His own meditative life was considerably helped, according to the *Majjhima-Nikāya*, by two Brahman monks who initiated him in the stages in "immeasurable" contemplation. But he shunned Mahāvira and the *Nigaṇṭhas*, who were in the habit of abusing him and his doctrines. One of his chief disciples *Moggallāna* was murdered by the *Nigaṇṭhas*, causing great grief to the *Tathāgata* and the Order.

Of Mahāvira's numerous disciples, two were favourites, Gautama, a Brahman, and Maskarī or Makkhali, also called Gośāla or Gosāla (the cow-stall), because he was born of a slave confined to a cow-pen by his master. The latter lived with his teacher for six years practising penances. Then they quarrelled, and Maskarī became the founder of the *Ājīvika* sect, the members of which did not seek their means of livelihood (*ājīva*) and went about naked. Maskarī denies both karma and its consequences, though he admits human frailty and depravity. He holds that karma can be worked out by transmigration and not by one's free effort. "There is no power, no energy, no human strength or heroic endeavours (*prakkama*).” The repudiation of *purushakāra* is associated with a special doctrine of re-birth and re-animation. The *Ājīvikas* are mentioned in the rock-hewn cave on Barabar Hills at Gayā and in the seventh pillar edict of Aśoka in the 3rd century B.C. The rock-caves on the Barabar and Nāgārjuni hills were obviously excavated by Aśoka and Daśaratha for the ascetics of the *Ājīvika* sect. With them is associated the beginning, in the 3rd century B.C., of Indian rock-cut architecture for the use of recluses in the forests. This blossomed forth in the later centuries into a most distinctive and splendid architectural mode, with its worshipful Buddhas, Śivas and Tirthaṅkaras and kneeling elephants and lions, scattered throughout the land from Bhājā in the west to Khanda-giri in the east and from Pattan Munara in the north to

Rameśvaram in the south. Varāhamihira refers to the Ājivika recluses in the 6th century A. D., while in the 9th century A.D. they are referred to along with the Trairāśikas and Digambaras by Śilāṅka. In the middle of the 13th century, we also come across a reference to the Ājivikas in an inscription of the reign of the Chola king Rājarāja, who imposed certain taxes on them. Thus the sect founded at the time of the Buddha maintained its existence and spread throughout India until at least the 13th century.

Mahāvīra, Maskarī Gośāla and Buddha were all contemporaries. Mahāvīra and Maskarī were, as we have seen, associates for six years of their spiritual life. The two other great religious leaders, Mahāvīra and Buddha, never met each other although their tours of ministry may have crossed. The Jains were called Niganthas and their leader Nātaputta by the early Buddhists. Mahāvīra was not the founder but was the last prophet (Tīrthamkara) and seer of Jainism. By his contemporaries he was regarded as the "Gaṇāchārya", "Tīrthamkara" and "Saṁghī", "Sādhusammata bahujanasya" (adored as a saint by the multitude). Senior to the Buddha in age, experience, and in the life of a monk (parivrājaka), he had his largest supporters from among the republican peoples, especially the Lichchhavis and the Mallas. King Cheṭaka of the Lichchhavis was his own uncle. The Emperors Bimbisāra and Ajātaśatru of Magadha, the Gaṇarājas of Kāśī and Kośala and the kings of Sauvīra, Aṅga, Vatsa and Avanti were his devotees. It is of interest to record that along with kings and great merchant princes who became his followers, there was Saddalaputta, master of five hundred potter-shops, turning out clay goods, who was also an ardent disciple.

Prevalent Faiths in the Sixth Century B.C.

Not merely Krishna Bhāgavatism, but another theistic cult, rooted in the Mohenjo-Dāro worship and reinforced by the Vedic laudation of Rudra and by the Brāhmaṇa exaltation of Mahān-deva, that of Śiva, was also popular at the time of Mahāvīra and the Buddha, especially in the Madhyadeśa. Both obtained converts particularly from the lower social orders and the foreigners (mlechchhas). From the Mahābhārata, Śānti Parva (284, 121-124), we gather that the Pāśupatas were opposed to the

rules of varṇa and āśrama. The Arthaśāstra refers to the Kāpālikas who lived outside the habitation. Śiva-Bhāgavatas, Māheśvaras or Pāśupatas were fairly numerous in the 6th century B.C. Śiva-Bhāgavatism finds an echo in one of the later Upaniṣads, the Śvetāśvetara, which describes Śiva as the Īśa or Supreme Lord of the Universe. The worship of the Vedic god Agni was also widely prevalent. The Brahmanical sect called the Jatilas were fire-worshippers; to these the Tathāgata preached at Uruvela his fire-discourse.

There were also popular theistic cults of trees and rivers. Yakshas or Yakshīs, Nāgas or Nāgīs, Gandharvas, Apsarās, tree-and-water spirits were worshipped by the common people along with Vāsudeva or Krishna, Śiva, Skandha, Viśākha, Umā and Vāsinī. Among the major deities worshipped in the temples of Mauryan cities mentioned by the Arthaśāstra were Durgā (Aparājītā), Lakshmī, Madirā, Viṣṇu (Apratiḥāra), Indra (Vaijayanta), Śiva (Subrahmaṇya), Vāīśravaṇa and the Aśvins. Krishna is also mentioned as a popular god. The popularity of Yaksha worship is abundantly illustrated by the large number of Yaksha and Yakshiṇī colossal statues found at Patna, Benagar, Mathurā and Gwalior, and the Bharhut railing images. The Nikāyas are full of references to the worship of the Yakshas who are endowed with supernatural powers and can produce supernatural phenomena. Such are Śivaka, the guardian of Sītāvana, Indaka of Mount Indrakūṭa, Kumbhīra or Gambhīra of the Vipula mountain and Sakka or Sakra of Gridhrakūṭa hill. Such trees as the pipal and nyagrodha were also worshipped by the common people with chaityas or roofless structures built round them.

It is, however, remarkable that the popular upheaval against ceremonial religion, priesthood and the caste system was embodied in the form not of theistic cults, but of strict apsyichism, and the practice of asceticism and a rigid moral code. Both Jainism and Buddhism originated, like many other reforming sects and schools, from mendicant ascetics, who like Krishna of the theistic Vāsudeva cult equally hailed from the Kshatriya clans and equally protested against the Brahman ascendancy and arrogance, stylised in the phrase 'gods on earth' (bhūśura). In the Nikāyas we find not only the recognition of superiority of the Kshatriyas, which was a social fact in the less Brahmanised

eastern portion of the Ganges basin, but also an acknowledgement of the status and prestige of the merchants and traders (setthi)—the new urban bourgeoisie who formed the mainstay of Jainism and Buddhism. Many nobles and wealthy persons, who due to misfortune were reduced to slavery or were forced to hire service to the wealthy in the age of disorder and turmoil, also preferred the new gospel. The economic background of the rise and spread of Jainism and Buddhism is the opposition to the Brahmanical monopoly focussed in the Kshatriya and merchant groups and in the dāsas and bhatakas, the have-nots (dalidda kula, adhana) whose degradation is lamented so sympathetically in the Jātakas. Mere indoctrination with the Law of Karma could not appease the classes that were dispossessed and oppressed or that could not rise to the status and power they demanded. Jainism and Buddhism both lifted the ban of the order from the dāsas, who when discharged became eligible for monkhood on terms of equality with other castes, as well as from the lowest castes such as the Chāṇḍālas who could rise to arhatship. As between the heresies, while Jainism found its intellectual background in the non-theistic Sāṅkhya philosophy, Buddhism affiliated itself with non-theistic Sāṅkhya and Vedānta.

The Teaching of Mahavira

India has not paid her worthy tribute to Vardhamāna Mahāvīra, the follower of Pārśva, who flourished from 599 to 529 B.C., preceding the Buddha in his preaching, wandering and proselytisation. Such austerity as his has hardly been seen. He threw off his garments and went about completely naked, never staying in a village more than one night and in a town more than five. In winter when the cold wind blew, the Venerable One, strong in control, despised all shelter. He would not talk to men lest he should form any attachments. Asked, he gave no answer. Even the dogs ran at him, bit him. Few people kept off the attacking, biting dogs. The scoffers lit a fire between his feet when the Venerable One sat in meditation in a field, but he remained oblivious. Through his ascetic practices he conquered all desires, and finally reached Nirvāṇa — “the complete and full, the unobstructed, unimpeded, infinite and supreme, best knowledge and intuition called Kevala (lit., spiritual nature or omniscience, free from any sources

of error)." After becoming the Jina (victor) and Kevalin (total), he travelled widely for thirty years teaching and organising, visiting all the great towns of Magadha and Aṅga, spending the rainy seasons when wandering was prohibited for monks at Vaiśālī, Champā, Mithilā, Śrāvastī and Rājagṛha. He also wandered in the pathless jungles of Western Bengal (Laddha, Vajjabhūmi, and Subbbhabhūmi) but had his greatest influence in Kāśī, Kośala, Videha and Lichchhavi territory. Kings Bimbisāra and Ajātaśatru of Magadha, King Hastipāla of the Mallas, Kings Kuniya and Cheṭaka and Prince Abhaya of the Lichchhavis, King Śātānika of Kauśāmbī and King Chaṇḍa Pradyota of Avanti were his supporters. The veneration which he commanded is amply indicated by the illumination in honour of his demise by the eighteen Gaṇarājas of Kāśī and Kośala, nine Mallakis and nine Lichchhavis.

Jainism does not accept any Supreme Being, but treats the Absolute as comprising a plurality of souls. The aim of each individual soul is to become a conqueror (Jina) through the annihilation of karma by the five vows, not to injure life, not to lie, not to steal, to observe strict chastity, and, finally, to renounce all interest in worldly things, especially to keep no property. Non-injury or non-violence is interpreted in a comprehensive sense by Jainism, including not merely all thought, speech and action that provoke discord but also spiritual excesses and acts of self-abasement, so as to promote amity with all, souls being attributed to all sentient creatures and even to plants, air, water and minerals. The most precious gifts of Jainism to Indian civilization are the universal profound reverence for all forms of life and the way of austerity and penance, including the discarding of clothes, self-mortification and fast unto death, practised not merely by monks and nuns but also by the laity including the nobility and the royalty.

The Moral Grandeur of Jainism

No religion in the world has stressed more man's immaculate purity, chastity and conquest over the body, the senses and world-stuff (pudgala) than Jainism. The moral grandeur of the Jina and the bleak, metaphysical solitude of the Kevalin, indeed, represent some of the sublimest peaks of man's dignity and freedom ever envisaged by him. The Jina seeks neither the Supreme

Bhagavān or Lord of the Universe, nor lesser gods, who answer prayers, nor the Ātman-Brahman nor the transcendental Being, such as the Brāhmaṇa seeks. He conquers his mind and passions (kaṣaya) through self-mortification, emancipates himself from dependence upon the world and all its objects, animate or inanimate, and transcends his own physical existence and karma-bondage (kevalin). "He is without body, without resurrection, without contact with matter; he is not feminine nor masculine, nor neuter; he perceives, he knows, but there is no analogy (whereby to describe the nature of the emancipated soul)." "Man," says Mahāvīra, "thou art thine own friend. Why wishest thou for a friend beyond thyself?" His utterance is similar to the Buddha's: "Self is the lord of self. Who else can be the lord?" The closing words of the Buddha were also an exhortation to his disciples "to be themselves, be their own lamps and own refuges". Jainism, Buddhism and Brahmanical asceticism are equally radical in their vows of renunciation of desires: in fact, of the five great vows (Mahāvratā) four are common. Jainism adds the monk's vow to forsake all possible interest in the mundane world and is much more vigorous and uncompromising in its ascetic denial. Viewing that women are "the greatest temptation in the world" and "the cause of all sinful acts", Jainism eschews altogether the least possible interest in sex. All love of the world, "all attachment whether to little or much, small or great, living or lifeless things are renounced". "Gods who retain women, weapons and rosaries are steeped in attachment and so stained", and "who are in the habit of giving and accepting favours" are regarded as false gods who ensnare men. Nakedness, self-torture and death by starvation are in Jainism the surest means of achievement of Nirvāṇa. The Jains, indeed, contemptuously spoke of the Buddhists as addicted to greed and luxury.

The Practical Genius of Mahavira

Corresponding to the eight-fold magga of Buddhism with its emphasis on Śīla or Right Conduct, Right Knowledge, Right Faith and Right Conduct are emphasised in the Jaina faith. As in Buddhism so also in Jainism, elevated contemplation is also insisted upon. Jainism and Buddhism equally represent Kshatriya movements against the caste egotism of the Brāhmaṇas.

The sage could come from even the Chāṇḍāla caste in Jainism. Harikeśa-bala was born in a family of śvapachas and became a monk and sage. As in Buddhist so in Jain monachism, meticulous rules of conduct were laid down for the monks and the laity for preventing the destruction of life of any sentient creature whatsoever.

But Jainism, unlike Buddhism, insisted upon the laity's participation in some degree and for some time in the vows or regulations of the monastic life. Just as among the Jain monks there was a hierarchy of leaders and superiors, so also the laymen by accepting particular vows could improve their moral standard and approximate to the ideal of conduct set forth and practised by the order of monks. The practical genius of Mahāvira is abundantly evident from his establishment of a four-fold order of his followers, comprising monks, nuns, laymen and laywomen. Both laymen and laywomen could aspire to monkhood by accepting its discipline in stages. It was thus that Jainism, unlike Buddhism, produced through the generations a succession of godly men and women, who could endure the storm and stress that drove Buddhism out of India. The moral injunctions prohibiting the eating of animal foods, drinking, gambling, hunting, stealing, adultery and debauchery have produced high-souled men and women from the Jain laity, and thus strengthened the social hold of the religion in the country. Even now the Jains sing the praises of the ideal domestic woman, the chaste Sulasā:

“Sulasā was a really faithful wife, there was no sham
about her;
She found no pleasure in worldly delights!
If we see her face, sins would flee away,
If we mention her name, our minds are filled with joy.”

The Vows of Samyaka and Ahimsa in Jainism

Nor is Jainism a self-sufficient, individualistic creed as it is often thought. Two unique features of Jainism are the vows of Samyaka and Ahimsā. Samyaka is defined by Haribhadra thus: “He has rightly undergone the vow of Samyaka who has attained the attitude of equality, which makes him look at all kinds of living beings as he looks towards himself. It is only

when a man learns to look upon all living beings with equality (samatva) that he can effect such a conquest over anger and hatred." The Jina, like the Jīvanamukta of the Vedānta, achieves a complete identity of his self with others. Thus we read in Ratnashekhara's Sāmbodha Sattari: "No matter whether he is a Śvetāmbara or Digāmbara, a Buddha or a follower of any other creed, one who has realised himself the self-sameness of the soul, i.e. one who looks on all creatures alike his own self, is sure to attain salvation." The Jaina doctrine of Ahimsā is also rooted in the conception of the universality and interdependence of Jiva, which comprises men, animals, insects and plants and also the elements of the earth, all regulated by the immutable law of karma. "As life is dear to me, so also is the case with other animals, and having seen such fruits who would be prepared to live by killing?" says Sulasā.

The essentials of Jainism are thus succinctly and pregnantly set forth by the Chāṇḍāla sage Harikeśa, whose penance overcame the limitations of his low birth. Approaching an enclosure where a Brahmanical sacrifice is taking place, he observes: "O Brāhmaṇas, why do you tend the fire, and seek external purity by water? The clever ones say that external purity, which you seek for, is not the right thing. The law is my pond, celibacy my bathing place, which is not turbid, and throughout clear for the soul; penance is my fire-place; right exertion is my sacrificial ladle; the body the dried cow-dung; karman is my fuel; self-control, right exertion and tranquillity are the oblations, praised by the sages, which I offer."

The Conceptions of the Tirthamkara and the Kevalin

The acme of Jaina perfection is represented by the two categories of human soul, viz., Tirthamkara or Maker of the Order, who, in his bodily form but with boundless knowledge, righteousness and patience, goes about propagating the truth to the world for endless ages; and the Kevalin, who is without body and is untouched and unhindered by matter and can neither be worshipped nor adored by the world. The Tirthamkara corresponds in some measure to the Avatāra in Brahmanism and the Bodhisattva in Mahāyāna Buddhism. The descent of the Tirthamkara in Jainism marks the revival of Dharma and the reorganisation of the four communities (tirthas) of monks and

nuns and the male and female laity. Into the four-fold order (chaturvidha saṃgha), all the followers of the preceding Tirthaṃkaras now enter, and thus the cycle of Dharma continues for ever and ever.

The Jaina worship of Tirthaṃkaras, which is now an established institution, hides the worship of God since the Tirthaṃkara typifies all that is perfect and infinite in the soul of man, and at the same time undertakes the teaching of righteousness, faith and insight in the divine manner to those who worship him. With the introduction of the worship of the Tirthaṃkaras in the second or first century B.C., in Jaina temples, no hard and fast distinction between Hinduism and Jainism could be made by the common people of India. It is note-worthy that the Sthānakavāsi sect among the Jains does not believe in idol worship.

The Spread of Jainism

For the elect the various stages of moral and spiritual ascent (guṇasthānas) of the human soul to the status of the Jivana-mukta and Kevali-siddha run parallel to the inner contemplative exercises in Brahmanical and Buddhist systems. But what is prescribed for the monks may also be practised by the laity though different sects differ in respect of what scriptures are permitted to be read by the laity or even by the nuns or what are intended for the elect. Jainism has maintained, on the whole, for more than two thousand years, a close and intimate connection and similarity of religious duties and attitudes between the monks and the laymen. This accounts for its immunity from the extraordinary doctrinal transformations experienced by Buddhism from within and the repercussions of life and conduct of its followers from without, that finally led to the disappearance of Buddhism in India. The layman desirous of the higher life accepts twelve vows that gently lead towards his capacity for monkhood with its stricter regulations. All through there is complete reliance upon self-culture and self-enlightenment that is expressed in the following daily-repeated hymn: "The soul is the maker and non-maker, and itself makes happiness and misery, is its own friend and its own foe, decides its own condition, good or evil, is its own river Veyarāṇī (Vaitarāṇī)."

Slightly older than Buddhism but born and nurtured in the same region, Jainism had in fact a much less chequered history than the former. Within a few centuries after Mahāvīra's death Jainism spread to every part of India. The 3rd and 2nd centuries B.C. were heydays of both Jainism and Buddhism. Soon after the Christian era Jainism spread over the whole of Western India, and its centre shifted from Magadha to Kathiawar, and subsequently also to Southern India. In the 7th century Hiuen-Tsang found Jainism dominant in Udra and fairly strong in Mahā-Kośala, Drāviḍa (capital Kānchi), Mahārāshṭra, and the Konkan. For wellnigh a thousand years from the meeting of the 2nd council of Jaina faith at Valabhī in 454 A. D. Jainism showed uninterrupted progress and expansion, spreading beyond the frontiers of India to Kāpiśa (as we learn from Hiuen-Tsang); while during the same period Buddhism passing through many vicissitudes simply took refuge in Bengal, Nepal and Tibet and ultimately vanished from India. It was largely because Jainism did not snap the bonds between the laity and the monks, nor rest merely on the monks and the monastic establishments, that it could survive both Hindu opposition and Muslim persecution. Jainism also made an effective rapprochement with Hinduism through its acceptance of its chief heroes, such as Rāmachandra, Krishna and others, and of the Brahmanical priesthood for officiating at various domestic ceremonies and even temple worship. Thus in the period of Muslim vandalism and oppression Jainism could easily hide itself in the capacious bosom of Hinduism, that has on the whole shown much respect and receptivity towards it in spite of occasional severe persecution.

CHAPTER VII

THE MINISTRY OF GAUTAMA TATHĀGATA

Dharma-chakra-pravartana

Buddhism was in large measure the child and heir of Jainism. The Tathāgata, the founder of Buddhism, after renouncing his home seemed to have first visited Vaiśālī, "the motherland of Mahāvīra", to seek his teachers and to begin Ājīvika and Jaina austerities. Gautama in Pāli literature is the Tathāgata (tatra-āgata, He who has arrived there, i.e. Nirvāṇa as contrasted with Saṁsāra, or tatham-gato, He who has arrived at Truth or the Four Truths) or Leader or perhaps Follower who found the Right Way, followed the Right Way and showed the Right Way, and also the Buddhō Bhagavā or the Enlightened and Blessed One. According to Buddhaghosha, Tathāgata is Tathāgata and means the One who is the Right Speaker, like the previous and future Buddhas, i.e. who speaks with omniscience, speaks at the right time and speaks the truth. The designation is, indeed, intended to be understood in many ways—the So-goer, the Right-farer, the Truth-finder or the Right-speaker. The earlier title used in the Aśokan edicts was the Buddha Śākyasimha. The great renunciation took place when Gautama, born and bred in luxury in the palace of King Śuddhodana of Kapilavastu, was only 29 years of age. We read in the Majjhima-Nikāya: "Before my enlightenment, while yet a Bodhisattva, I thought, oppressive is life in a house where it is not easy to practise a full, pure, and religious life. . . . While yet a boy, a black-haired youth in the prime of life, while my unwilling mother and father wept with tear-stained faces, I cut off my hair and beard and putting on yellow robes went forth from a home to a homeless life." For half a dozen years Buddha sought various teachers in various towns and cities including Vaiśālī, Rājagṛha and Uruvela. Soon he found that the way of self-mortification associated with penance (tapas), greatly in vogue among the

Ājivikas and Jainas, did not lead to the goal he sought. After this he took his bath in the river Nairāñjanā and sat under a pipal tree at Bodh-Gayā where he at last attained the truth. After his Enlightenment he proceeded to Isipatana Mrigadāva (deer park) near Banaras where he delivered his first sermon. For the first time in the religious history of India the Buddha preached in the language of the common man, which he preferred to Sanskrit understood only by the upper classes. The basic principles of Buddhism are formulated in the famous Mrigadāva sermon called the Dharma-chakra-pravartana-sūtra. Man should follow the Middle Path by first grasping the Four Truths: (1) "the truth of pain" as manifest in birth, old age, sickness, death, sorrow, lamentation, dejection and despair; (2) "the truth of the cause of pain", viz., craving for existence, passion, pleasure, leading to rebirth; (3) "the truth of cessation of pain" by ceasing of craving, by renunciation; and (4) "the truth of the way that leads to the cessation of pain", viz., the Middle Path (Majjhima Paṭipadā) which avoids the two extremes (antas) of excessive attachment to worldly pleasures and excessive self-mortification and which is the noble Eight-fold Path (ārya āṣṭāṅgika mārga) consisting of "right views, intention, speech, action, livelihood, effort, mindfulness and concentration." From that moment till the day of his death at the age of eighty the Buddha's life was one of constant peregrination, ministry, conversion and service.

The Buddha as the Forerunner and the Renovator

Yet the Buddha never thought himself to be the founder of the Order (Saṃgha), or that it could depend wholly upon his direction and guidance. He loved to contemplate himself as a mere forerunner (pubbangamo) in the way. Rightly speaking, Buddhism is protestantism in the field of Hindu faiths, starting as it does from the fundamental Hindu backgrounds of the unity of life and the law of karma and man's inalienable moral responsibility. The Tathāgata, however, interpreted the Upaniṣadic unity of the Brahman as the collectivity of all sentient creatures (Khuddaka-Nikāya), united together by the bond of life, whence proceeds the Buddhist inculcation of the dynamic active virtues of altruism (Brahma-vihāra). He also rejected the ancient Hindu doctrine of personal rewards and punishments of karma from birth to birth on the basis of the non-existence of a permanent

self (an-atta), and stressed that the consequences of karma are borne from generation to generation in the entire world collectively or finally by the eternal or universal Buddha. This last tenet wherein karma is reinstalled as a tremendous impersonal and cumulative moral force of the collectivity, and the evil thought or word or deed of a single individual is calculated to disrupt the entire fabric of society just as his good thought or word or deed relieves and uplifts generations of suffering mankind together, was the Tathāgata's reaction against the pernicious nihilism of some of the extreme contemporary heresies. The dominant stress on earnest and diligent striving for the holy life (brahmacharya), and self-transcending love and charity, demolishing the boundaries of the transient ego, was Buddhism's supreme challenge to the arid intellectualism, scepticism, and individualism of the age. It is these that indeed accounted for the immediate success of the Tathāgata's ministry, and the enthusiasm it aroused among the people. Neither the doctrine of the origin and cessation of sorrow through desirelessness, nor that of the endless cycle of saṃsāra and karma, nor again "homelessness" and asceticism was new. What was supremely novel, and satisfied the social and intellectual needs of the age, was the combination of the doctrine of an-atta and futility of the gods, rituals, austerities and powers (iddhis) of Hinduism with a dynamic and collectivist, and not sad and egoistical, interpretation of karma, binding together, ever onward, from generation to generation, the moral life of the entire human community. This provided the basis of the metaphysical justification of charity, altruism and service as leading to the peace and serenity of the Buddha's Nirvāṇa, and the necessary moral impulsion for the rapid propagation of the new religion. "Since to every man the self is dear, let him see he harms no one." The identification of amity (mettā) with wisdom (prajñā) that belonged to the earlier Upaniṣadic teaching supplied the basis of the new religious gospel. The real significance of the first of the Four Noble Truths of the Buddha, viz., everything is Impermanent, Ill and Suffering, is that unless man abandons the notion of individuality he must suffer. This leads to Serenity, Love and Compassion. Buddhism is unique among the religions of the world in investing the metaphysical doctrines of self and not-self with the highest moral import. The dynamic character of self-knowledge

in early Buddhism is indicated in the *Āṅguttara-Nikāya* where it is pointed out that a monk is called "self-knowing" (*attaññū*) when he knows: "So far am I advanced in faith, virtue, learning, renunciation, wisdom, and illumination." This ideal of practical virtue, compassion, wisdom and illumination contained wholesome and active social elements and was in consonance with the early missionary preoccupation and monastic zeal of Buddhism. What Buddhism gave to the world was not only philosophy but also ethics which captured the hearts of the people of India. Thus men flocked to the Buddha from various paths of life, rich and poor, high and low, speaking different tongues and belonging to different religions, and they were called Śākyaputtiya Śramaṇas. The great cities and towns of the holy land of the Ganges with which his ministry was associated were Gayā, Rājagṛha, Vaiśālī, Banāras, Kapilavastu, Śrāvastī, Sāketa and Kauśāmbī. It is note-worthy that both Jainism and Buddhism made greater headway in Magadha and Aṅga which were full of mixed and non-Aryan stocks and where Brahmanism was less strongly entrenched than in the western parts of the Ganges valley. The people of Magadha are described in the *Atharva-Veda* as *Vrātyas* who were outside the pale of orthodox Aryan civilization and found it difficult even to speak Sanskrit.

The Personality of the Buddha

The Buddha's fame, however, came from "perfection in conduct and righteousness", says a contemporary report. Kings Bimbisāra and Ajātaśatru of Magadha and King Prasenajit of Kośala venerated him; princes, generals, nobles, merchants, matted-hair ascetics and the common people all came under his spell. The merchant Anāthapiṇḍika acquired the park of Prince Jeta at Śrāvastī for the Buddha's retreat with carts of gold so as to cover the entire grove with the gold pieces. And yet he was humble and unostentatious to the core of his heart. "Let me be", says the Buddha, "a physician to the sick, a friend to all men, a very sweeper for humility." Once Sāriputta mentioned to the Buddha in sincere veneration that he regarded him as the greatest or wisest man in the world. The Buddha mildly rebuked him, naively pointing out that he could never have known any Buddhas of the past nor of the future, nor could he

penetrate even his own mind thoroughly. "Then why, Sāriputta, are your words so grand and bold?"

An alert, forceful and genial personality with immaculate purity of heart, profound simplicity and austerity of life and deep tenderness and sympathy for the frailties, delusions and sorrows of man, the Buddha is one of the most charming, yet vigorous, figures in history. In an age of elaborate ceremonial, superstition, self-indulgence and metaphysical hair-splitting, the Buddha preaches in India the Middle Path (Majjhimā Paṭipadā) between cruel self-torture and the life of desire, between intellectual gymnastics and crude, futile scepticism. The Buddha stresses compassion, charity and service, but at the same time sets the limits of benevolence thus: "Benevolence to all men, attachment to none." The gods of popular Hinduism such as "the four great kings at the four quarters of the firmament" are rejected by the Buddha. Sakka, Brahmā Sahampati, Mahā-kālanāga-rāja and other deities, all suffer discomfiture from Māra's army whom, however, the human Tathāgata vanquishes. The Buddha enjoins the house-holder's duties towards fellow-men that are preferred to rituals and offerings to deities. He, indeed, places Man above the gods and spirits (devatās), insisting that the Dhamma is essential for "the good and the gain and weal of men and devatās" alike. This is entirely in consonance with the teachings of the Upaniṣadic Rishis and the Yoga practices of the age which the Tathāgata adopts and absorbs from Brahmanism with an emphasis, however, on moral adventure rather than on worship, service to society rather than extreme asceticism, and serenity of mind or nirvāṇa in present life rather than heaven (svarga) in the future. The overall emphasis of the Buddha is on universal Love, Compassion and Charity, indicated in both the inculcation of Mettā (Love), the first of the holy integrative and harmonising attitudes (Brahmavihāra), and the Messianic promise of Metteyya (Maitreya, the leading deity in the Mahāyāna), the Buddha to come. The metaphysical basis is the ultimate unity of the universe—"the great ocean profound, immeasurable, unfathomable" (Saṃyutta-Nikāya). This is called in the Dīgha-Nikāya (sutta 13) a state of union with Brahman in Upaniṣadic fashion. But the union is the totality of all beings (satta) and is achieved through Charity and Love (Mettā)—the abolition of the barriers set up by

egoism through moral adventure and effort (*Sammāvayāmo*); it is not negativist but essentially practical. The Buddha's call is the call to intellectual sanity, moral alertness, spiritual depth and humanitarian service. His yoga method on the basis of *Samyaka*, in its comprehensive character, is "dignified, rational, effective and progressive", in the words of the *Dhammapada*.

The Many-sidedness of His Gospel

The serene, compassionate man, perhaps the greatest of mortals, towering aloft in profound tranquillity and peace, undefiled and uncontaminated, like the loftiest peak of the Himalayas, had a unique sense of realism, balance and proportion as well as religious depth, sincerity and charity. To the disconsolate *Kisā Gotamī*, mourning the loss of her only child, the great teacher says: "Go, gather mustard seed, but gather it at a house which death has not visited." The mother finds that death and sorrow are universal. She obtains solace as she thinks to herself: "How selfish am I in my grief: Death is common to all; yet in this valley of desolation there is a path that leads one to immortality who has surrendered all selfishness." The Buddha accepts her as his disciple and says: "As all earthen vessels made by the potter end in being broken, so is the life of mortals. In whatever manner people think a thing will come to a pass, it is often different when it happens, and great is the disappointment; see, such are the terms of the world. He who seeks peace should draw out the arrow of lamentation and complaint and grief." To the person addicted to carnal desires the Buddha points out the meanness and vileness of sensualism, the impermanence of all things and the profit of freedom from desire (*tanhā*) which sets ablaze the world with universal hate, lust and infatuation. If one realises life as evanescent and sorrowful he can have no *tanhā*. To the poor, wretched, miserable leper, seeing the teacher in the midst of a big crowd and expecting an almsgiving of food, both hard and soft, he gives not alms but insight. The leper is softened, roused, set free, and made happy by the teacher's pious words. To the cowherd, who describes to the Buddha the docility and goodness of his wife and asks him: "Rain down, God, if thou wilt", the teacher replies: "My mind, it is a docile one, set free. Full many a day I tamed it down and shaped it to my will. No evil now is found in me." To the ascetic with his tangled locks

the teacher says: "Better than matted locks and ashes are insight and self-mastery." For the amelioration of the miserable lot of the slaves (*dāsas*), "beaten, branded, imprisoned and poorly rationed" by their masters and mistresses, the Buddha insists on humane and compassionate treatment and provision of food and dainties in proportion to the work done. A certain monk is suffering from dysentery and lies where he has fallen down in his own excrements. The teacher washes him and lays him on the bed and says to the other monks: "Brethren, ye have no mother and no father to take care of you. If you will not take care of each other, who else, I ask, will do so? Brethren, whoever would tend me, he should tend the sick." To the *Brāhmaṇas* devoted to sacrifice, he teaches that he is the true *Brāhmaṇa* who leads a pure life and that kind of sacrifice is nobler, less difficult and at the same time bears greater fruit and profit, which is non-injury to life, abstention from taking of what is not given, freedom from wrong conduct, from lusts and from falsehoods. Brahmanical contemplation and culture the Buddha adopted—*Brahmacharya* or the holy living and *Brahmavihāra* or the cultivation of the four altruistic holy attributes, viz., love, pity, sympathy and serenity—but he condemned the exhibition and misuse of secret ritual powers (*śīla-bhātā-parāmāso*) as well as sacrifices of animals, offerings to *Agni*, base arts and magical practices. To his own kinsmen, the *Kshatriyas*, the Buddha enjoins: "All men tremble at punishment, all men love life. Remember that you are like unto them and do not cause slaughter." Or again to a young layman, who is over-zealous in his genuflections to the Hindu deities of the six regions with joined palms, the teacher stresses duties to fellowmen classified into six categories, viz., parents and teachers, wife and child, friends, kinsmen, slaves and labourers and religious devotees, who will respectively protect north, south, east, west, the nadir and the zenith. Thus all directions will be peaceful, without fears.

The Buddha's respect for the dignity of the common man is clearly indicated by his injunction for his protection and security, as recorded in the *Singālovāda-Sutta*. In five respects the slaves and labourers must be treated fairly "for supporting the earth" by their superior—by arranging their work according to their strength, by providing their food and wages (*vetana*), by ministering to them in sickness, by the distribution of ample

medicines and delicacies (rasanam), by granting leave at times. And the slaves and labourers show goodwill to their superior in five respects. They rise early; they lie down late; they are honest (dinna-dāyī); they are efficient workers and bring him renown and fame. Again, a householder's goal is wealth, wisdom is his ambition, a craft is his resolve, work is his want and perfected work his fulfilment. The above is Confucian in its spirit and sanity.

The courtesan Ambapālī in order to meet the Buddha causes many sumptuous chariots to be made ready, mounts on one and goes out from Vaiśālī to the village Koṭigāma. In the morning the Buddha comes to the place where the food distribution of the wealthy courtesan was going on. When the Buddha, having eaten, withdraws his hand from the bowl, Ambapālī, the Indian Mary Magdalene, sits down on one side and says: "I give, revered Sir, this Ambapālī grove to the mendicant community." The Buddha accepts the gift. The asceticism and serenity of the Buddha and the frivolity, falsehood and luxury of woman, "unfathomably deep like a fish's course in the water," are poles asunder. Yet the Buddha accepted women into the Order as nuns, not however without grave misgivings, yielding to the piety and pressure of his foster-mother, Mahā-prajāpatī. All the same it was the unstinted charity and munificence of women such as Vishākā of Śrāvastī, Ambapālī of Vaiśālī and Suppiyā of Banaras that were largely responsible for the maintenance of the young order. To Kīsā Gotamī, the beautiful maiden of noble Śākya family, who used to gaze at the Buddha when not yet a monk from the upper terrace of her mansion, and loved him with a woman's love, breathing forth the cry: "Happy, indeed, are his mother and his father and his wife, of whom such an one is lord", he says that happiness lies not in the satisfaction of desire and craving but in their eradication and Kīsā Gotamī, as we have seen, later became a nun and ultimately an arhat in the Buddhist order. Buddhism reproaches sex as the fertile source of evil desire, entanglement and sorrow, and relegates it to a realm whence it can never tarnish the bright mirror of knowledge with dirt and dust. Yaśodharā, the sad forsaken wife of the Buddha, and Kīsā Gotamī, the sorrowful mother who as a Kshatriya maiden had intimacy with the Buddha in his youth, have both become in the eyes of the Order mere nonentities in the impersonal life and discipline of the nunnery.

The Buddha's humility was profound and sincere and touched everybody. Kings, such as Bimbisāra and Ajātaśatru of Magadha and Prasenajit of Kośala, Brahman teachers, such as Poksharadi, and merchant princes, like Anāthapiṇḍika, bowed before him, yet he would go regularly from door to door in a city or village, with the alms-bowl in hand, waiting silently for the morsel of his daily food. In one cold winter, when the sharp-cutting wind was blowing, he was found resting on a couch of leaves in deep contemplation in the Simsapā forest at Alavī. Though he had little patience with his disciples who showered praises on him, he showed infinite patience with his detractors. Unmoved by abuse or slander, he would say: "Abuse that is not answered is like the food rejected by the guest which reverts to the host."

The Buddha, like Christ, often spoke in parables, for by a parable, he says, "many a wise man perceives the meaning of what is being said". Apt similes and metaphors run through his discourses, interspersed here and there with fable, romance and poetic embellishment. The soul of Buddhism, the impermanence of life, can hardly be more sublimely expressed than in these poetic words: "A path of many births and deaths have I vainly traversed, seeking the builder of the house; full of suffering in birth (recurring) over and over again. Now have I seen thee, O builder of the house; thou shalt not again build the house. Thy rafters are all broken, the battlements of the house are demolished. The soul having escaped changeability has attained the end of desire."

The Conception of Nirvana

The Buddha abhorred display of superhuman powers such as divination, sooth-saying, thought-reading, foretelling and forecasting as meriting total and immediate expulsion from the Order. He also condemned transcendental speculations. Reaching Nirvāṇa he was silent about it due to profound reverence. Goethe says: "The highest is silence." In the intellectual and spiritual climate of the Buddha's days there was profound appreciation of the Absolute, the Supreme Reality, the Universal Self that comes to one through contemplation. A similar illumination came to the Buddha. The Buddha defines it thus: "It is that state of intellect (viññānam) which is invisible, boundless,

the landing stage from everywhere". "In this sphere there is neither earth nor water, light nor air, neither this world nor that world, both sun and moon, neither infinity of space nor infinity of consciousness, nor nothingness." This is almost identical with profound passages in the Upaniṣads. The Buddha also asserts that the supreme knowledge is also Loveliness and Beauty. Nirvāṇa is abiding in the Beautiful. The Buddha himself distinguishes between his Nirvāṇa and the Brahma-nirvāṇa of the Upaniṣads in the Majjhima-Nikāya. The Buddha's Nirvāṇa, though characterised like Brahma-nirvāṇa by negative phrases (*neti-neti*), reveals Reality as becoming, a dynamic process (*paṭicca-samuppāda*), instead of the static unity of some Upaniṣadic seers. And yet only silence can do justice to this state of super-consciousness (*abhi-sambodhi*).

"The Buddha has no metaphysical theories", says the Majjhima; nor had he any solicitude for discussion about transcendental experiences with contemporary sophists. "What is not revealed conduces to no profit, nor is concerned with the holy life," observes the Buddha whose gospel is a standing invitation to a Way of Living (*Ehi-passiko* or the doctrine of 'come and examine'). The Buddha's teaching begins and ends with Enlightenment. On the whole he concentrates on moral aim and purpose. "Just as children play with little sand-castles and are amused by . . . and set store by them as long as they have fancies, so we play with our bodies, feelings, perceptions, activities and consciousness. As we cease to have any desire and craving, we no longer play with them. The destruction of craving is *Nibbāna*." Thus teaches the *Saṃyutta-Nikāya*.

The Buddha's Emphasis on Moral Alertness and Striving

It is the sanity and sincerity of the Buddha's simple moral teachings, summarised in three brief imperatives, "Do good to others; Cease from evil, hate and injury; and Purify the mind", that attracted kings, nobles, merchants and the common men and women of India. True, the common people complained that "the ascetic brought childlessness, widowhood and subversion of families", but they all adored him in deep reverence. Once the Śākya and the Mallas were preparing for an armed fight about riparian rights, and the river would have been a stream of blood but for the intervention of the Buddha whom all venerated.

“Lo! As some mighty elephant superb
Amidst Himalayan forest-trees he goes;
So rapt in contemplation breathing deep,
And calm in body as in mind serene.
As some pure lotus bloometh undefiled,
So liveth he, the Uncontaminate.”

At the age of eighty, after forty-four years of his ministry spent in continuous, untiring labour for fellowmen, when the Tathāgata found his life gradually ebbing away, he declared to his favourite disciple Ānanda, the aim and purpose of the fraternity. “I am now frail Ānanda, I am aged, I am an old man, who has finished the pilgrimage and reached old age; eighty years old am I . . . Be ye to yourselves, Ānanda, your own lamp (atta-dīpa), your own refuge (atta-saraṇa), seek no other refuge. Let the truth be your lamp and your refuge, seek no other refuge.”

On the eve of his death the travel-worn teacher lies down between two śāla trees at Kuśinagara with one foot resting on the other, calm and composed, and speaks to Ānanda: “See Ānanda, all abloom are the twin śāla trees: with untimely blossoms do they shower down upon the body of the Tathāgata, they sprinkle it, cover it up, in the worship of the Tathāgata. Enough Ānanda, sorrow not, lament not. Have I not said to you ere now, Ānanda, in all things dear and delightful there is the element of change, of separation, of otherness.” Then says he to the assembled disciples: “Hearken, O disciples, I charge ye: every thing that cometh into being passeth away: strive without ceasing.” These are the Buddha’s last words.

Buddhism as a Social Egalitarian Movement

Both the great religious movements, Jainism and Buddhism, rejected the authority of the Vedas, condemned ceremonialism and sacrifice of animals, and broke away from the caste system. The Buddha again and again stresses that a true Brāhmaṇa is not one who is born in the Brāhmaṇa family but he who behaves as a Brāhmaṇa. “The station of Brāhmaṇa”, he says, “is not due to birth but to abhorrence of the world and its pleasure.” Again, “not by birth is one an outcaste (Vasalo) or a Brāhmaṇa, by act one is an outcaste or a Brāhmaṇa”, observes the Sutta-nipāta. In the Majjhima-Nikāya there is a conversation between the Buddha and a Brāhmaṇa youth, Assalāyana. The Buddha refutes

the claims of the Brāhmaṇas to form the best caste, significantly pointing out that nobles, merchants and workers can all show a heart of love, kindness and peaceableness and by right conduct arise after death in a heaven-world. In some of the adjoining districts there are only two 'castes'—masters and slaves—and (a member of) the master (caste) can become (a member of) the slave (caste), and vice versa. A class stratification cuts across the boundaries of castes. All the four castes, nobles, priests, merchants and workers, may be endowed with the five qualities to be striven after: faith, health, honesty, output of energy and wisdom. In such a case there is not any difference, that is to say, in freedom as against freedom. Thus the Buddha lays down "the purity of the four castes": the noble, priestly, merchant and worker. The Buddhist Order was thrown open to all castes; examples of low castes being admitted, like the nobles and Brāhmaṇas, were Upālī, the barber, a vulture-tormentor and the wives of a poor straw-plaiter and a basket-weaver. There was in fact no ban against the admission of even the Chāṇḍālas, Pakkusas and Patikas, a few of whom were admitted to the Buddhist fraternity. The Buddha preaches the oneness of mankind. "Behold the grass and trees, reptiles, animals, birds and winged creatures. Each after its kind bears a native mark. In man there is not manifold, nothing specific is in men's bodies found: the difference in men is nominal", says the Sutta-nipāta. All castes and classes, except the Chāṇḍālas, were admitted to instruction in the universities and educational institutions of the times. The Buddha was the first great Indian Protestant to restore and re-interpret the true metaphysical theory of varṇa in its functional and spiritual sense. As a matter of fact in the Nikāyas and the Vinaya, the Kshatriya comes first and then the Brāhmaṇa in the specification of the four castes; the Brāhmaṇa being synonymous with the holy man, and having little to do with caste or birth. Again, Buddhism went further than Jainism in discarding the worship of Hindu gods and the service of the Brahmanical priesthood. This helped the social egalitarian movement, especially the complete observance of caste equality in the Order. "Just as all the great rivers, viz. Gangā, Jamuna, Achirāvati (Rāpti), Sarabhū, Mahī, when they reach the great ocean, even so, mendicant brothers, these four castes Kshatriyas, Brāhmaṇas, Vaiśyas, Śūdrās, when they go forth from the home

to the homeless life, lose their former names and families and are denominated as devotees and disciples of the Śākyan."

Both Jainism and Buddhism gave a new tilt to the Indian scheme of life by stressing that a person can choose the life of contemplation and monkhood at any stage without going through the preparatory stations of student-discipleship, family and vocation that was the rule in orthodox society. Parents found it sometimes difficult to maintain discipline in the family lest the sons betook to the Order. Thus did both these new movements exaggerate the spirit of "other-worldliness" that can, however, be easily explained by the dominance of priests, theologians, sophists and rationalists during the period. Jainism more than Buddhism used the laity more, and hence was a less disturbing factor in Indian social life.

The Dhamma of Compassion

But the most remarkable and enduring contribution of these protestant movements was the great emphasis on non-violence, compassion and love. Particularly was the stress on a positive social ethics significant in Buddhism that declared that "all other ways are not worth a fraction of the way of goodwill or mettā". "As a mother even with her life protects her child, her own and only son, so let one cultivate a loving heart (mānasam) without measure towards all living beings. Let one cultivate a loving heart (metta-citto) without measure throughout the world, above, below, from side to side, unstinted, without strife, without rivalry." Thus observes the Khuddaka-Nikāya. In the Brahmajāla Sutta we read about a bewildering variety of metaphysical speculations and spiritual experiences reaching an almost incredible extravagance at that time in India, while asceticism amongst vast numbers of śramaṇas and ājīvikas of different orders also reached an unheard of severity and self-torture. The Buddha was no metaphysical idealist but was a sane practical teacher of the highest spiritual profundity, intellectual acumen and moral calibre. Even in the Upaniṣads in spite of the self-transcendent, all-encompassing knowledge there is not much of moral fervour. The wisdom of the Upaniṣads achieves a sublime ethical neutrality. Good and evil belong to the sphere of phenomenal existences, from which release is sought by lonely meditation in which the distinctions of right and

wrong, virtue and vice completely disappear. Says Yājñavalkya :
"The man who desires the Self is not followed by good or evil; for
he has then overcome all the sorrows of the heart." The Bud-
dha's Middle Path which steered clear of both self-indulgence and
self-mortification, and also incorporated "right conduct" or
moral dharma as an indispensable element in the Noble Aryan
Eight-fold Way was a return to the more ancient Indian wisdom.

"Dhamma, I will declare to thee,
Mettagu, said the Master then,
A thing seen here, not lore come down,
The which who finds and knows and fares
Alert, may cross the world's foul mire."

Again, "Dhamma is the Truth, the Conscience, the Law, the
King of Kings, the Turner of the Wheel, the matchless Victory
in the struggle. Monks, teach Dhamma which is lovely at the
beginning, lovely in the middle, lovely at the ending. Walk,
monks, on tour for the blessing of the many-folk, for the hap-
piness of the many-folk, out of compassion for the world, for the
welfare, the blessing, the happiness of gods and men." The
Buddha is not only the greatest son of India, but he is also one
of the greatest men born; his life and message have an abiding
significance for troubled humanity.

PART III

THE INTERCHANGE BETWEEN INDIAN AND FOREIGN CIVILIZATIONS

MAURYAN CULTURE AND PAN-INDIANISM (ĀRYABHĀVA)

CHAPTER VIII

THE EMPIRE FROM THE IRANIAN PLATEAU TO THE INDIAN OCEAN:

The North-west under the Achæmenian and Macedonian Empires

It is remarkable that the establishment of the first and most extensive Indian Empire by Chandragupta Maurya, larger than even the British dominion immediately followed the subjugation of a considerable portion of the north-west by the Iranians and the Greeks. Maurya imperialism was the Indian reaction to the pressure and danger from the Iranian and Hellenic domination of India.

In 518 B. C. Darius conquered Eastern Iran and thence organised an expedition for the subjugation of the Punjab. A Greek sailor was also commissioned to explore the Indus basin and return home by sea from the mouth of the Indus. In the early inscriptions of Darius (520—486 B. C.) we find Gāndhāra, the area round Peshawar and Rawalpindi, included as his tributary region. Later on Darius' empire included the Indus valley as far as the deserts of Rajputana. Thus did the trans-Indus region, the Hidoo (Sindhu), become the twentieth and richest satrapy of the Achæmenian Empire, paying an annual tribute of 360 Euboic talents of gold (over £ 1 million). Darius styled himself in one of his inscriptions as "Kshāythyānām Kshāyāthiya"—the king of kings—the title being reminiscent of what is used in the Aitareya Brāhmaṇa.

One important result of the Indus valley and the north-west becoming an integral part of the Achæmenian Empire was the development of the Kharoshthī alphabet which was an adaptation of Aramaic to the requirements of Indian phonetics and was current in the north-west in preference to the essentially Indian Brāhmī till the fourth century A.D. An inscription in Aramaic, the script of the Achæmenian bureaucracy, assigned to the first half of the third century B. C., was found at Sirkap in Taxila and was issued by Aśoka, since here the ruler is mentioned as Priyadarśin. The use of Aramaic in the Aśokan inscription was obviously intended for the benefit of people from Iran and the West who were in Taxila and could not understand the local dialect.

Within another century the Persian Empire became too feeble at its easternmost boundary in India and a large number of small states, including several republican communities, arose and freed themselves from the Persian yoke. Alexander of Macedon subjugated the Persian Empire and invaded India in 326 B. C. for reconquering the eastern satrapy of the Achæmenian Empire. The small republican tribes and communities showed valiant resistance but lacked organisation, unity and leadership. The Paurava king, no doubt assembled a vast horde of infantry, chariots and elephants but the heavy rain and storm overnight made it impossible for the Indian army, especially the war chariot and elephant units, to manoeuvre in the slush. The Macedonians broke the serried ranks of 30,000 soldiers on foot, while the elephants wounded by the mounted Macedonian archers played havoc among the Indian infantry. It was a brief but a memorable combat followed by the invading army crossing the Chenab and the Ravi and moving on to the Beas subjugating the various kingdoms and tribal territories on the way. The war-worn rank and file of the Greek army, however, refused to march further towards the Ganges valley. Alexander in chagrin now turned his steps towards the Jhelum. Many principalities of the lower Punjab and Sind were next subjugated. Alexander finally left India in 325 B. C. and marching through the deserts of Baluchistan reached Babylon where he suddenly died in 323 B. C.

In order to set little bits of Hellas down in India, Greek garrisons were stationed in Pushkalāvati, Aornos and other

towns on the great rivers; three satrapies under Persian or Macedonian viceroys were created in the areas west of the Jhelum, and three vassal states under Indian kings, namely Pāurava, Āmbhī and the ruler of Abhisāra were also created. Shortly, however, there were revolts in the Greek camp and great unrest among the Indian Malloi (Mālavas) and the Oxydrakai (Kshudrakas).

The Sarvabhauma Rajya of Chandragupta Maurya

At this juncture Chandragupta emerged on the scene as the leader of India's determined struggle for the expulsion of the Greeks. Justin records: "India after Alexander's death, as if the yoke of servitude had been shaken off her neck, had put his Prefects to death. (The Satraps Nica-nor and Philippos were both assassinated.) Sandrocottus (Chandragupta) was the leader who achieved this freedom He was born in humble life Having collected a band of 'robbers', he instigated the Indians to overthrow the existing (Nanda) government He was thereafter preparing to attack Alexander's Prefects, mounted on an elephant which fought vigorously in front of the army."

Chandragupta was assisted by the Brāhmaṇa Chāṇakya, his teacher, friend and guide, in collecting his troops and forming alliances with the smaller states. As a matter of fact Alexander's conquest and political integration of the various principalities and republican tribes favoured Chandragupta's task of presenting a strong united front against the foreigners. Chandragupta who had already acquired sufficient knowledge of military science in the military academy of Taxila seems to have met the Macedonian conqueror personally, and learnt something of Greek strategy and tactics, especially the phalanx movement which enabled him to overcome his Prefects in battle.

Before long Chandragupta overthrew Nanda, the wicked and unpopular ruler of Magadha. That event was so significant and unexpected that it became legend, and was not merely utilized in the Sanskrit drama Mudrārākṣha (of the seventh century A. D.), but also graphically described in the Buddhist text, Mahāvamsa and in the Jain text Sthavirāvali Charita. At the end of his reign Chandragupta foiled the ambitions of Seleukos, Alexander's general, who held Babylon, and in trying to extend his empire crossed the Indus in 305 B. C. Seleukos had

to come to terms with Chandragupta to whom he ceded the four Greek Satrapies of Paropanisadai (Kabul), Aria (Herat), Arachosia (Kandahar), and Gedrosia (Baluchistan) in return for 500 elephants. Aśoka mentions in two of his rock edicts that the Syrian Emperor Antiochus was his immediate neighbour, occupying territory on his frontier (an Anta or a Pratyanta king), but does not refer to Diodotus, the ruler of Bactria, presumably because he was a former governor who became a rebel and carved out his own kingdom (about 250 B. C.) by revolting against the Seleucid sovereign, Antiochus Theos.

The Mauryan Empire was separated from the Seleucid Empire by the Hindukush, extending south-westward from the Pamir knot on the north to the highlands rising above Herat, thus covering the northern boundary of modern Afghanistan. Beyond the Hindukush in the Oxus basin lay the empire of Seleukos. The borderlands within the Mauryan Empire included, therefore, Gāndhāra, Kāpiśa, Ariana (Herat), Drangiana (Seistan), Arachosia (Kandahar) and Gedrosia (Baluchistan). It will thus appear that the Mauryan Empire controlled all the highways from Central Asia to India.

Alexander the Great entered Afghanistan by the Hari Rud Valley which separates the chain of the Hindukush from that of Koh-i-Baba. Thence he marched southward along the depressions into Drangiana, then along the Helmand basin to Kandahar and Kabul. After his detour across the Bamiyan passes to Bactria, he penetrated into the Kabul valley for the invasion of India and crossed the Indus near Attock, one of his generals in charge of another division using the Khyber route to India. On his return journey from Thatta on the Indus he wished to march by the Makran coast route, but being deflected by the suffering of his army took the inland route across the Bampur valley. Another part of his army, which had elephants, went back by the Bolan route to Kandahar. Thus the entry and return of Alexander's armies covered the major routes of the Indian frontier and Iranian plateau.

Centuries later Hiuen-Tsang came from Bactria down the Hindukush, "the Snow Mountains", along the caravan route over the passes to get to Bamiyan, the capital of Kāpiśa in the centre of the mountain range. Kāpiśa, due to its central position, commands the principal passes of the Hindukush and consequently

the great lines of communication between India and the Oxus basin. From Kāpiśa and Lampaka the road lies straight and easy through the Kabul valley and the rich province of Gandhara across the Khyber pass to India. The entire region enjoyed more abundant rainfall and agricultural prosperity for a whole millennium after Alexander's invasion than at present.

The strategic importance of these ancient sites on the Indian border-lands is clearly indicated by the extensive Kushan empire having its three centres of power—Kāpiśa commanding the passes of the Hindukush and the high roads to Bactria and Central Asia; Purushapura (Peshawar) in Gāndhāra, the gateway to the Indus valley, well protected by a girdle of mountains and rivers; and Mathurā the gateway to the Ganges valley in the East. In the Maurya Empire the famous Uttarapatha must have led from the well-fortified frontier towns of Kāpiśi, Maśākāvati, Varāṇā, Pushkalāvati and Takṣaśilā to Hastināpura, Kāśi and Pāṭaliputra. Not only overland trade with Central and Western Asia but also military defence against northern invaders was facilitated by the Royal Road resembling that of the Persian Empire. Chandragupta Maurya by his occupation of Gāndhāra, Kāpiśa and the Helmand valley effectively blocked both the Khyber and Bolan routes of invasion, made famous in history by successive invaders from Alexander the Great to Ahmed Shah Abdali. Thus for the first and the last time the natural political frontiers of the Indian empire were extended to the borders of Iran. India cannot enjoy lasting stability without conquest of, or amity with, all the peoples and states in the plateau intervening between Iran and the Land of the Five Rivers. The treaty with the Greeks was cemented by a marriage between the Maurya Emperor and a Greek Princess. A Greek envoy, Megasthenes, who was in Arachosia for many years and must have learnt the prakrit language of the frontier, was sent by Seleukos to the Imperial court of Pāṭaliputra.

Plutarch mentions that Chandragupta also subdued the whole of India; he had by this time under his command 600,000 infantry, 300,000 cavalry, 9,000 elephants and a great company of chariots. Before his death the Emperor relinquished his throne and lived as a Jain ascetic at Sravana Belgola in Mysore, according to literature and epigraphic records. The choice of this distant place and Aśoka's reference in his inscriptions that

his immediate neighbours in the south (antāḥ) were Cholas, Pāṇdyas and others lead my brother Radhakumud Mookerjee to the conclusion that the first Maurya Empire included Śravaṇa Belgola within its limits and that North and South were for the first time unified by Chandragupta under one paramount sovereignty, thus fulfilling the traditional conception of Sārvabhāuma rāja, Ekarāt or Samrāt.

Contributions of Chanakya, the Harbinger of Brahmana Supremacy

Chandragupta owed not merely his early education but also the success of his alliances, political conquests and administration largely to Chāṇakya, a Brāhmaṇa of encyclopædic knowledge and political astuteness and statesmanship, who on his part satisfied his great ambition of establishing a Kshatriya ascendancy in India through the supersession of the unrighteous Śūdra rule of the Nandas. Chāṇakya, according to the Buddhist text *Vaṃsatthappakāsinī*, obtained his mastery of all the Śāstras from the schools of Taxila, where he was born and where he educated Chandragupta from boyhood in many sciences and practical arts. It was also Chāṇakya who formulated the severe penal code of the Mauryas as well as the bulk of imperial administrative measures and procedures, moulded by the new requirements of centralised government as the first Indian empire was founded and consolidated. He was, in fact, the real maker of the Maurya empire and the harbinger of later Brāhmaṇa supremacy. In his time the Kshatriya was at the head of the four varṇas, "fair in colour, fine in presence, stately to behold", as we read in the Dialogues of the Buddha. The Kshatriyas were the warriors, counsellors and officers of the state, mentioned as the Rājanna and Rājabhogga in the Jātaka literature. The Brāhmaṇs came next and were distinguishable into religious and secular Brāhmaṇs. The religious Brāhmaṇs used to follow their ancient occupation of teaching in their forest retreats. The Jātakas mentioned 1,000 kahāpaṇas as the usual honorarium given to the Brāhmaṇ teachers for a whole course.

Magasthenes mentions that the Brāhmaṇ would also attend the great assembly convened by the King for committing any useful suggestion to writing, observing any means of improving crops and cattle or promoting public interest in any other

manner. "In requital he received valuable gifts and privileges", including daily pension varying from 100 to 1,000 kahāpaṇas and exemption from taxation and confiscation. Thus the Brāhmaṇ's functions continued to be service, contemplation, study and teaching according to the ancient Varṇa-dharma, and the forest hermitage, where he went after giving up his family and occupation, was frequently met with in Maurya India. But side by side with the teacher and the recluse, became now prominent the scheming, worldly Brāhmaṇ. Against the Ājīvika, Jain and Buddhist emphasis of asceticism and renunciation of home and social obligations in Maurya times, Chāṇakya, the champion of the ancient Brāhmaṇ orthodoxy, re-interpreted the Varnāśrama dharma on the basis of the ancient metaphysical principles and discouraged premature renunciation without the formal sanction of legal authorities and adequate provision for the family. This was a natural concomitant of Mauryan empire-building.

Indian Imperial Notions of Arya Citizenship and Secularisation

In the Arthaśāstra, the symbol and embodiment of a new imperial policy, we come across the expression Āryabhāva that in some measure corresponds to the Roman imperial notion of common culture and citizenship. "It is no crime for the Mlechchhas to sell or mortgage the life of their own off-spring. But never shall an Ārya be subjected to slavery." The Ārya is a free born citizen of the Mauryan empire. No Śūdra can be enslaved for he also "breathes the breath of the Ārya" (Ārya-prāṇa). The son of an Ārya can never be a slave. "The offspring of a man who has sold himself off as a slave shall be an Ārya". Thus did the imperial decree abolish the ancient custom of hereditary slavery. A slave woman taken as wife by an Ārya acquires freedom along with her children. A slave is not only entitled to the inheritance of his father, but can also purchase his freedom through his own earnings over and above those in his master's service. "On paying the value (for which one is enslaved) a slave shall regain his Āryahood. The same rule shall apply to born or pledged slaves." The kinsmen of a slave can and should free him from bondage by payment of ransom. The manumission of slaves and the stress of the privileges of the Ārya, the encroachment upon which is punishable, is a systematic attempt on the part of a

secular state to abolish slavery virtually for all and to ground the incidence of Āryahood on culture rather than on class and birth. This did not escape the discerning eye of the Greek ambassador Megasthenes who paid a glowing tribute to Indian culture on this account and observed also that both the philosophical theory and law favoured the treatment of all as free men. Onesicritus also corroborated that in Sind slavery was unknown. The abolition of slavery was backed up in the Arthaśāstra by the withdrawal of the immunity of the Brāhmaṇ from criminal penalty and capital punishment. The Maurya empire sought to establish, in other words, the equality of all free citizens or Āryas before the law irrespective of caste of birth. This principle was underlined by Aśoka in his edicts which insist on all his officers to rigidly conform to the principles of daṇḍa-samatā (equality of punishment) and vyavahāra-samatā (equality in law-suits). The Mauryan empire for the first time in Indian history gave a political connotation to the status of the "Ārya", no longer restricted by the sacramental incidences of the Dviija, but embracing all the free citizens of an entire continent. "All Indians are free, and not one of them is a slave," observes Arrian. It was no doubt the earliest great movement of emancipation of the slaves, dāsas and bhaṭikas, who probably became very numerous as the Jātakas testify, and of the equality of all classes, Kshatriyas, Brāhmaṇs, Vāiśyas and Śūdras before the law. Death by drowning is to be meted out even to the Brāhmaṇs guilty of treason, says the Arthaśāstra. Thus did India first obtain from the Imperial Mauryas the conception of "Ārya"-nation. The endeavours of a firm and judicial administration under Mahāmātras and Rājukas supervised by itinerant judges, establishing uniformity and equality of legal and other rights and punishment, also contributed to cement the bonds between the different classes and castes in a secular state. The Empire was also based on a wide-minded toleration of the manners, customs and laws not only of the aboriginal and forest peoples (āṭavikas) but also of the conquered peoples and foreign residents. The Arthaśāstra especially recommends that the king should even adopt the manners, language and dress of the conquered and respect their gods, social institutions and festivals. Every community, caste, corporation or village was left in complete freedom to pursue its own culture and mode of living peacefully according to the universal code of

Dharma or Law—the Varnāśrama regulations that govern the conduct and goals of life of the Āryas. These trends were no doubt in consonance with the heterogenous social composition of a vast empire with the Pārasikas, Yavanas and other foreigners inhabiting the north-west, and the zeal of people in a cosmopolitan age to take their due share in the expanding vocations, trade and commerce of the country irrespective of birth and caste regulations. That Ārya secularisation fast advanced in Maurya India is indicated by the Brāhmaṇs taking to all sorts of occupations: commerce, trade and agriculture, “living with the wealth and pomp of kings”, and exploiting to the full the dāsa-bhaṭaka classes. The secular Brāhmaṇs used to receive Brahmadeya gifts of land and cultivated them by means of slave and hired labour. They also took to trade from which they accumulated considerable wealth. A Brāhmaṇa in one of the Jātakas is mentioned as sailing to Suvarṇabhūmi with merchandise, and slaves and workers. If he could not maintain himself he became a cattle-breeder, hunter or trapper dwelling in a border village or outside the city gate. The Jātakas indeed frequently mentioned the Brāhmaṇs engaged in agriculture; those who are impecunious adopt any calling, become bhaṭakas, cowherds and goatherds on hire or even become beggars. Though in both Buddhist and Jain literature the Brāhmaṇs are generally regarded as inferior in status to the Kshatriyas it was in Maurya India that they were first acquiring considerable wealth and prestige (Mahāsāla Brahman) through enjoyment of revenues of whole groups of villages (“yielding a hundred thousand”) assigned to them by the kings, through the acquisition and cultivation of large estates worked by as many as 500 ploughs by means of slave and hired labour, and through trade, both inland and foreign. In the Jātakas we find mention of the Brāhmaṇ not merely as the king’s purohita influencing politics, legislation and administration but also as his treasurer. Thus the Brāhmaṇs were already rising into prominence that changed into ascendancy in the later centuries when the Kshatriya varṇa suffered final and complete eclipse in its long fateful struggle with the sturdier Indo-Greeks, Indo-Scythians, Indo-Parthians and Kushans.

Social Contrasts Between the Millionaires and the Outcastes

The Vāiśyas acquired considerable riches in the Maurya period both by trade and by management of big estates and

cattle ranches that they acquired. Many of them became rich millionaires in the big cities of Northern India, where *asīṭikoṭi-vibhava setṭhis* or multi-millionaires, of whom *Anāthapiṇḍika* the *maha-setṭhi* is a shining example, are mentioned, held in esteem by kings, nobles and peoples of villages and cities. Often these multi-millionaires became financial advisers of the state. The office, called *setṭhitā*, probably the alderman of a city like Banaras, Rājagṛha and Śrāvastī, was filled by the king according to the *Mahavaṃśa*. It is also noteworthy that it was the generosity of these *setṭhis* and *gahapatis* that was largely responsible for the support of the Buddhist Saṅgha by gifts of parks and gardens and construction of chaityas and stūpas. Both the Kshatriyas and the Vaiśyas were organised into military or economic guilds. The military guilds looked after the profession of arms as means of livelihood, while the economic guilds of artisans, traders and merchants devoted themselves to various economic pursuits and used to form larger unions or confederations under guild chiefs. There were industrial *jeṭṭhakas* and trading *setṭhis*, who rose to great power and eminence in Maurya India; they came in close relation to the state and participated in the civic administration. The head of the mercantile community, one of "the seven jewels of the state," was called *gahapatiratna* or *setṭhi*—the state treasurer and banker.

Below the Vaiśyas (*Ibhya*s) were the *Śūdras*, comprising the bulk of the people who lived by toil and were engaged in the various handicrafts or as slaves, servants and hired workers. Below the *Śūdras* in Mauryan India were the low tribes or castes (*hīnajāṭiya*) and the low craftsmen (*hīnasippiya*). The former comprised the five groups, viz, the *Chañḍālas*, the *Pukkusas*, the *Nishadas*, the *Veṇas*, the *Rathakāras*. There were aboriginal peoples who had not been assimilated to the social organisation and regarded as beyond the pale of society. They lived outside the village gates and were described as "ill favoured, unsightly and misshapen". In the Pāli texts the *Chañḍāla* is the least and lowest in society. To eat the remains of his food is an unpardonable sin for a Brāhmaṇ. Even the sight of a *Chañḍāla* is impure and requires washing the eyes with perfumed water. A *Chañḍāla* is belaboured because of standing at the city-gate, where the merchant's daughter encounters him while going out of the city.

But this does not prevent the same merchant's daughter to become ultimately his wife. The *hina-sippani* or degraded callings included the butchers, barbers, potters, weavers and leather-workers who were not regarded as outcastes. The outcastes who would pollute utensils that could not be used by others were called "*nirvāsitas*" by the famous grammarian Pāṇini, who pointed out that the plural forms varied according to the social status of the caste. Such castes as the blacksmiths, carpenters, weavers, milk-men, washermen etc., who are *anirvāsitas*, according to Pāṇini, were indicated by the dual number as contrasted with the plural affix for the *nirvāsitas* or the excommunicated ones such as the *Chañḍālas* and *Mritapas* (*Pukkusas*) although even these were included among the *Śūdras*. Patañjali includes the *Śakas* and the *Yavanas* in the category of *anirvāsitas*. There was, however, no hard and fast distinction between these "low" trades and callings, for persons could follow one or other calling. Thus a *Jātaka* story mentions a *Kshatriya* in love working successfully as a potter, basket-maker, reed-worker, garland-maker and cook.

Maurya Social Stratification

The Pāli literature draws its materials largely from half-Aryanised Magadha and Aṅga where social gradation is much more flexible, where the *Brāhmaṇs* have already begun to challenge the *Kshatriya* supremacy, where the rich *seṭṭhis* and *kuṭumbikas* coming from the *Vaiśya* community assail the supremacy of both the upper castes, and where the various artisans and functional classes occupy an intermediate position in economic condition and social status rising in the rungs of the social ladder or going down according to circumstances. The four *varṇas* comprising the *Kshatriyas*, *Brāhmaṇs*, *Vaiśyas* and *Śūdras*; the eighteen organised crafts or guilds (*aṭṭhāraso seniyo*) comprising masons, carpenters, blacksmiths, goldsmiths, silver-smiths, painters, stone-dressers, leather-dressers and "men skilled in all arts and crafts" (*Jātaka*, vi, 427); the five *hina-sippanis*, or unorganised, despised crafts followed by the half-Āryan, half-aboriginal groups, comprising the basket makers, cobblers, potters, weavers and butchers that do not yet seem to have been crystallised into castes or *jātis* (as contrasted with *sippas* or crafts in this period covering part of the 5th century B. C.—the date of the *Vinaypiṭaka*);

and the five *hīna-jātis* comprising the aboriginal *Chañḍālas* (scavengers and hunters), *Pukkusas* (flower-gatherers), *Nishādas* (hunters or trappers), *Veṇas* (bamboo-workers) and *Rathakāras* (wheel-wrights) outside the pale of society, (*Vinaya*, IV, 6-10): such was the scheme of social gradation. The *Chañḍālas*, *Pukkusas* and *Nishādas* were low ethnic groups, while the *Veṇas* and *Rathakāras* were low, functional (artisan) groups integrated into the *hīna-jātis*. Up to at least the 5th century B. C. there were much interchange of occupations and no water-tight boundaries between the four *varṇas* (*Brāhmaṇas*, *Kshatriyas*, *Vaiśyas* and *Śūdras*) and the eighteen guilds which, as frequently mentioned in the *Jātakas*, the king or the Great Being assembled or took with him to the neglect of the other social orders. In the upper rungs of the social order no caste formation was discernible in the Maurya period. It was in the lowest rungs among the five *hīnajātis* that we find in the 5th century B. C. the beginning of the fateful transformation of both ethnic and functional groups into closed castes or *jātis* that ultimately spread to all parts of the social structure. *Āpasthamba* refers to the *Nishāda*, *Chañḍāla*, *Paulkāsa* and *Vaina* as the lowest castes (II, 1, 2, 6). Finally, in the Maurya period miscegenation was not uncommon leading to the rise of certain mixed castes (*antarāla*) the offspring of *pratiloma* marriage were especially looked down upon; such were the *Ayogava*, *Kshattā* and *Chañḍāla* (of *Śūdra* father); *Māgadha* and *Vāidehika* (of *Vaiśya* father), and *Sūta* (of *Kshatriya* father). The social contrast between the highest and the lowest strata is best indicated in the *Majjhima-Nikāya*: "A fool should he become a human being after the lapse of a very long time, he comes into one of the low stocks—*Chañḍālas*, *Nishādas*, *Veṇas*, *Rathakāras* and *Pukkusas*, he is reborn to a life of vagrancy, want and penury, scarce getting food and drink for his stomach or clothes to his back. A wise man, should he become a human being after the lapse of a very long time, he comes into one of the high stocks, *Kshatriyas*, *Brāhmaṇas* or *Gahapatis*, he is reborn to a life of affluence, riches and wealth with abundance of gold and silver coins, and with abounding substance and abounding possessions".

Corporate Village Life

Such briefly is the social picture of pre-Mauryan and Mauryan India. Maurya imperial administration rested on

the grāma as the smallest unit under an officer called grāmaṇi, also, called the grāmika and grāma-bhojaka, and on groups of 10, 20, 100 and 1000 villages under officers called respectively Daśi, Viṃśi, Śateśa and Sahaseśa, in an ascending order of authority, culminating in Sthānikas Rājukas and Prādeśikas, charged with the welfare of Janapadas or country-parts and Prādeśas or districts. It appears that under Mauryan imperialism the autonomy of the villages was not eclipsed, the grāmika being not a salaried official but elected by the villagers. The agrarian system is represented by small farms worked by peasant proprietors who paid to the state one eighth, one sixth or one fourth of the produce (bhāga) according to a cadastral survey of which there is definite evidence in the Jātakas and Megasthenes. One sixth is the normal proportion besides bali that seems to have been an additional levy. Big estates are also met with, owned by landlords-cum-money-lenders (Mahāsālas, Kuṭumbikas or Gahapatis) who employed large numbers of slaves and agricultural labourers. The state owned all the virgin or unoccupied lands and forests, while the village owned the pastures and groves, irrigation tanks and canals. The village was the arena of an exuberant variety of collective enterprises, economic, social, educational and humanitarian, in Maurya India. There is distinct evidence of much enrichment and variegation of the corporate village life as found in the Vedic period. The villagers, we read in one of the Jātakas, "stood in the middle of the village transacting its business", improved its highways and roads, "built cause ways, dug water tanks, built a hall; they showed charity and kept the commandments". The public hall or Saṅthāgara of the village is the focus of all its activities. A village has its public hall, its sports ground, a court of justice (vinichhayam), assembly of religious discourse (dhammasabhāma), beautiful pictures, and a tank with 1000 bends in the bank and 100 bathing ghats and an alms house (dānabhāttam), we are told in the Mahāummagga Jātaka. Some references in the Arthaśāstra and the Jātakas suggest collective farming not to speak of collective management of irrigation, pasturage, grazing, education, recreations, charities and sacrifices.

In the Arthaśāstra we find that the ancient grāmaṇi or or grāmika was superseded by the gāmabhojaka or gāmasāmiko

who enjoyed the revenues of the land and styled himself the village lord. He made a lot of money out of the fines imposed on the villagers for intemperance, murder or any other offence and took bribes in dealing with village disputes. He was subordinate to the gopas, sthānikas and still higher officers of the administration. In the pre-Mauryan period the village grāmika was entrusted with the collection of village revenues and adjudicated rural disputes. His power and status are amply evidenced by the fact recorded in the Mahāvagga of the Vinaya-piṭaka that the grāmikas of Bindusāra (the successor of Chandragupta), 80,000 in number, used to be summoned in a great assembly. Village self-government suffered an eclipse due to the Mauryan policy of centralisation. As the Mauryan empire enlarged itself, provincial viceroys were appointed at Ujjain, Taxila and Tosali (Dhauri) who were assisted by a number of high officers called mahāmātras. Metropolitan administration of the imperial and viceregal capitals was conducted by a commission of thirty members that constituted six boards of five members each. Small boards supervised the imperial departments in Pāṭaliputra viz., the mechanical arts, foreign residents, registration of births and deaths, sales, exchanges and weights and measures. Justice was administered by three judges with the assistance of Brāhmaṇ legists, and by village elders, guilds and caste-bodies. Mauryan imperialism showed a good deal of state control and management from city planning and colonisation of virgin lands to the management of crown lands, forests, industries and import and export trade. Even modern India can have important lessons for her planning and nationalisation schemes from Mauryan administration. The state had a central granary at headquarters as a reserve against famines and droughts, and a monopoly of the mining enterprise. It regulated wages, including agricultural wages, and also the relations between work and remuneration fairly and squarely. Kauṭilya gives a list of eighteen chief officers of the imperial administration (Adhyakshas).

Expansion of Foreign Trade and Intercourse

The extension of empire and peace in the country led to a phenomenal expansion of inland and foreign trade. For the first time India had developed a strong naval force (nausenā),

guarding the vast coastal regions of India and giving adequate protection to the merchantmen on the high seas against piracy and attack on vessels importing pearls and jewels from the Tamil states and Ceylon to Northern India. For the proper supervision and control of the navy there was actually a Board of Admiralty at Pāṭaliputra as mentioned by Megasthenes. Ships, "full-rigged for distant seas" carrying "hundreds" of passengers and traders, coasted round India for distant Bharukachcha (Baroach) and Suvannabhūmi (Sumatra or generally the East Indies) touching Taprobane (Ceylon) on the way. There is a well-known passage in the Milindapañho (about first century A. D.) "As a shipowner, who has become wealthy by constantly levying freight in some seaport town, will be able to traverse the high seas, and go to Vaṅga (Bengal), Takkola (Malay), China, Sovira (Gujarāt), Suratṭha (Kāthiāwār), Alasanda (Alexandria), Kolapattana (Coromandel coast) and Suvannabhūmi (Burma) or any other place where ships do congregate". There is mention also of a trading journey to Baveru or Babylon. The great ports of the Mauryan empire were Bharukachcha (in the kingdom of Bharu) on the Narbadā, Śūrparaka, Roruka (the capital of Sovira) and Karambiya in the West and Tāmralipti in Vaṅga whence sailed out traders for the East Indies and Ceylon and for Indian coastal trade.

All these ports were reached by magnificent inland road systems from Pāṭaliputra through Benares, Kauśāmbi, Bhārhut, Vidiśa and Ujjain, crossing the great forest-belt of Middle India (Kātyāyana's Kāntārapatha), to Pratishṭhāna and Bharukachcha or again, from Pāṭaliputra via Champā on the Ganges to Tāmralipti (modern Tamruk) or through Nālandā, Rājagriha and Bodh-Gaya by land to the same port; again from Tāmralipti through Bodh-gayā, Benares, Prayāga, Kauśāmbī, Mathurā, Hastināpura, Śākala, Taxila, and Pushkalāvati to Kāpiśi and Bālhika (Balkh, Pāṇini's Uttarapatha) whence Indian goods were carried down the Oxus to Europe by way of the Caspian and the Black Sea. There was also a difficult route from Śrāvastī through Kāmpilya and Mathurā and across the deserts of Rājputānā to Barbara or Paṭala on the Indus, whence Indian merchandise was carried by the ancient land route to Iran and the Greek cities of Asia Minor. Pāṇini refers to Madra-vāṇijya, Kāshmīra-vāṇijya and Gandhāra-vāṇijya indicating the importance of trade with

these distant regions. In the great marts of Pāṭaliputra, Vaiśalī, Champā, Benares, Kauśāmbī, Sāketa (Ayodhya), Śrāvastī, Mathurā and Taxila were assembled goods from all parts of the civilized world. Rhys Davids observes: "Silks, muslins, the finer sorts of cloth and cutlery and armour, brocades, embroideries and rugs, perfumes and drugs, ivory and ivory work, jewellery and gold (seldom silver), these were the main articles in which the merchants dealt". Pearls, gems and sandal wood from the South were sold in the marts of Northern India and Western and Central Asia. Caravans going on the Iran and Gandhāra routes across sand dunes and deserts were steered in the coolness of nights by the stars under the land-pilot. Thalaniyyāmaka, and the captain or Sātthavāha. The following would represent the important centres of the textile industry as recorded in the Arthaśāstra and the Jātakas: Silk-weaving, Benares, Vanga, Pundra, and Suvarṇakudda; cotton, the finest stuff from Benares and Bengal, also Madurā (in the south), Aparānta, (Western India) Kālīṅga, Vatsa (Kauśāmbī) and Mahishā (Māhishmati); blankets, Gāndharā, Uḍḍiyāna, Nepal, and Vaṅga; Fibres, Puṇḍra (Northern Bengal), Suvarṇakudda, Magadha and Bālhika.

The extensive Mauryan empire and commerce established close contacts between India and Western Asia and Europe on one side, and China, on the other. The house of Seleukos sent the ambassador Megasthenes in the reign of Chandragupta and Deimachos in the reign of Bindusāra to the court of Pāṭaliputra. Ptolemy Philadelphos of Egypt also sent an envoy named Dionysios to Pāṭaliputra. The Mauryan emperors in their turn sent envoys and messengers (dūtas) to distant foreign countries. Aśoka sent his dūtas or envoys for the preaching of his Dharma to the distant states of Antiochos Theos of Syria, and of the four kings, Ptolemy Philadelphos of Egypt, Antigonos Gonatas of Macedonia, Magas of Cyrene and Alexander of Epirus. A whole host of Yavana and Persian officials found employment in the various provinces of India. In the reign of Aśoka a Yavana chief was given the charge of an important province and the execution of important irrigation works. The influx of foreign traders, merchants and officials led to the creation of a separate Board of Imperial Administration to deal with the interests of foreigners, as mentioned by Megasthenes. The presence of

A HISTORY OF INDIAN CIVILIZATION

Iranians and Greeks in the Indus provinces led to the introduction of new scripts, viz., Aramaic, Kharoshṭī and the Yavanānī lipi (alphabet) of Pāṇini. On the Kabul river there was an actual Greek colony identified by some historians with the city-state of Nysa. Later on as the Mauryan empire declined in strength, Greek colonists and adventurers carved out independent states in the north-west and pushed into the Ganges Valley even as far east as Pāṭaliputra. The Iranian influence on Indian art and culture was naturally greater than the Greek influence. It is suggested that the architecture of the Imperial Mauryas bears Iranian impress. It is from Iran that Aśoka is said to have borrowed his sermons in stone, the similarity in tone to that of the valedictory address of Darius at Naksh-i-Rustam being obvious. The idea of excavating rock-hewn viḥāras, it is also pointed out, is borrowed from the tombs of the Achæmenian kings. The bell-capitals of Asoka's column, which Havell considers, however, as derived from Indian inverted lotuses, may be due to Perso-Hellenic influence. The colossal animal motifs, such as the lion and the bull, the winged and the fabulous animals, as well as the palm tree that we come across in Bharhut and Sanchi bear the impress of Assyrian and Babylonian art patterns, assimilated as these have been in the background of Indian religion to the decorative motifs of folk symbolism in Śunga art. While the extent of Iranian influence is difficult to appraise, there is no doubt that Mauryan art and craftsmanship fully absorbed whatever they borrowed, and reached a standard of excellence unparalleled in the ancient world, except perhaps in Greece. Indian soldiers, no doubt formed units of the Persian army and fought against the Greeks in the fifth century B. C. But India's messengers of peace and goodwill, the dūtas of Aśoka who were sent to the Western Hellenistic states in addition to those sent on purely political business, had on the whole left indelible marks on phases of Greek philosophy, Gnosticism and other Christian doctrines. There seemed to have been established also a number of medical and philanthropic institutions for the aid of both man and animal by Aśoka's foreign missions, which were little bits of India planted in the West just as Alexander wanted to set little bits of Hellas down in Western Asia and India. Not only did the Mauryan Empire include for the first time Āryāvarta and

Dakṣhiṇāpatha but also the entire plateau of Kābul, Herāt, Kandahār and Balūchistān in the vulnerable north-western borderland of India up to the boundaries of the sister Selucid Empire of Syria. India was given for the first time a political and cultural entity that was symbolised by the Maurya imperial conceptions of Ārya nationhood and citizenship (Āryabhāva), vital and vigorous enough to be transplanted in the colonies and settlements beyond the Pamirs that came to be designated as "Ārya", and in the course of a century of unprecedented peace and toleration, by the organised Dharma-vijaya missions to Ceylon, Burma, Siam, Indonesia, Nepal, Gāndhāra, Central Asia and the Hellenistic West. These gave a broad, humanistic Ārya interpretation to the monastic creed of the Buddha in conformity to the secular ideal and requirements of an extensive empire, and were some of the most successful and far-reaching civilizing adventures in the history of mankind. In Buddhist literature the treasures of a Chakravartin comprise a wheel, elephant, horse, jewel, queen, treasurer and minister. These are represented in a relief at Jaggyapeta, 2nd century B. C. The Aśoka wheel on the Sārnāth lion capital symbolises at once the universal temporal sovereignty of the Mauryan Chakravartin monarch, whose chariot traverses the entire earth up to the ocean, and the spiritual sovereignty of Dharmāśoka, who emulates the example of the mythical Dalhanemi and Mahāsudaśśana ruling the four quarters of the earth in righteousness for the welfare of men, beasts and birds. The cakka or chariot is the ancient Vedic symbol of universal empire that Buddhist art and religion utilised. The Anguttara Nikāya observes, "A cakkavatti is a just and pious sovereign in dependence on Dhamma". "His cakka cannot be set back by any human foe whatsoever". Under Aśoka the cakka becomes an appropriate symbol of toleration, secularism and universalism of Mauryan Empire as it is an eloquent testimony to the sensitiveness and majesty of Mauryan art.

CHAPTER IX

THE TRIUMPH OF PACIFISM: THE HUMANITARIAN MISSION OF AŚOKA, BELOVED OF GODS

The Humane Policy of Aśoka the Righteous

A religion is judged by the personalities it creates and moulds. In the entire annals of kingship in the world there is no parallel of an emperor-cum-bhāgavata like Aśoka, who anticipated by twenty two centuries the modern dreams of world peace and righteousness and of supersession of the war-drum (bheri) by the reverberation of the law (dharma-bheri). On the other hand, Buddha's enlightenment under the Bodhi tree at Gaya would have meant merely the introduction of a new unpopular religious heresy in Hinduism, a local creed perhaps confined to the middle Ganges Valley, but for "Dhammarāja" Aśoka's missionary zeal and patronage (dharma kāmata) that shaped it into a world religion. The remarkable feature in the career of Aśoka, the "beloved of gods", is that he was converted by Buddhism from a fratricide, the murderer of ninety nine brothers for the sake of the throne, a veritable Aśoka the Terrible (Chandāsoka) into Aśoka the Righteous (Dharmāsoka). That is the Mahāvamśa legend. But history records that the massacre in the Kalinga war by which Aśoka extended the boundaries of the Mauryan empire to include the whole of non-Tamil India led to his momentous moral transformation. As his own Edict says: "Directly after the conquest of the Kalingas, the Beloved of gods became keen in the pursuit of Dharma, love of Dharma, and inculcation of Dharma. The chiefest conquest is not that by arms but by Dharma (dharma-vijaya)". Soon after the Kalinga war Aśoka became a lay disciple or upāsaka of the Buddhist fraternity and went out on "pious tours" (Dharma-yātrā) to Bodhgayā and came to be familiar with the way of living of monks in the Buddhist Saṅgha. On the gates of Sāñchī we find depicted the pilgrimages of Aśoka with two of his queens to the Isipatana Mṛigadāva and also to the Bo-tree at Gayā, and a magnificent fresco in the Bagh caves also probably depicts the Emperor,

seated on a mighty tusker and moving in a procession as if returning from a victorious campaign and espying Buddhist Bhikkus on the crowded roadside. May not this represent the episode of Aśoka's conversion that was so critical for both his personal life and the history of Buddhism? Another scene in the fresco represents the Emperor in solemn consultation with his ministers and courtiers, while at a distance the queen weeps and is being consoled by her attendant. On the roof the cooing pigeons bespeak tranquility. Aśoka seems to have spent 256 nights on his pilgrimage and completely changed over into Buddhist life and habits.

With this transformation Aśoka ordered that in the capital of Pāṭaliputra, "no animal should be slaughtered for sacrifice, nor shall any merry-making be held, because in merry-making is seen much that is objectionable". (Rock Edict I). He forbade the massacre of living creatures to make curries in the Imperial kitchen. He discontinued the royal hunts, prohibited the slaughter of all four-footed animals which are neither utilised nor eaten, such as cattle, the killing of fish for certain days, the branding of horse and cattle and "the castration of bulls, he-goats, rams, boars and other animals". Aśoka also made arrangement for the procurement of medical herbs, roots and fruits, curative or wholesome for man and beast, by importing from other countries and "plantation in all places wherever they did not exist". The Emperor says in Pillar Edict VII, "On the high roads, too, banyan trees were caused to be planted by me that they might give shade to cattle and men, mango-gardens were caused to be planted, and wells were caused to be dug by me at each half-kos, rest-houses were caused to be built; many watering stations were caused to be established by me, here and there, for the comfort of cattle and men. Slight comfort, indeed is this. For by various kinds of facilities for comforts, the people have been made happy by previous kings, and myself. But, that the people might strictly follow the path laid down by Dharma, was this done by me". In the Saṃyutta-Nikāya we find the significant observation that

"Folks from earth to heaven go who are:
Planters of groves and fruitful trees,
And they who build causeway and dam,
And wells construct and watering-sheds
And (to the homeless) shelter give".

The Combination of Righteousness with Statesmanship

The same humane policy was extended by Aśoka to barbarous forest folks (āṭavikas) to whom the beneficent message went forth, indelibly impressed on rock and pillar in the outlying forested part of the empire. "Even upon the forest folk in his dominion His sacred majesty looks kindly and seeks to win over to his way of life and thought. It is said unto them how even in his repentance is the might of His sacred majesty, so that they may be ashamed (of their crimes) and may not be killed. Indeed His sacred majesty desires towards all living beings freedom from harm, restraint of passions, impartiality and cheerfulness". In Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra we also find that the foresters (āṭavyas) were placed under the administration of special officers called the Aṭavipālas. Neighbouring states, friendly or inimical were given the assurance on behalf of the Emperor and for his sons and great-grandsons that the Dharma will be followed. "The chiefest conquest is that achieved by Dharma and not by brute force". Again "the conquest that by this is won everywhere, that conquest, again, everywhere is productive of a feeling of love. Love is won in moral conquest. That love may be indeed, slight, but His sacred majesty considers it productive of great fruit, indeed, in the world beyond. For this purpose has this religious edict been indited that my sons and great-grandsons that may be, should not think that a new conquest ought to be made; but that if a conquest is theirs (or pleases them), they should relish forbearance and mildness of punishment, and they should consider that only as conquest which is moral conquest". Thus did the grandson of one of the greatest conquerors of India replace the old conquest of arms by the conquest of righteousness, and succeeding generations remembered with gratitude Aśoka as Dharmāśoka-narādhipa, "righteous Aśoka, the ruler of men".

Such was the spiritual transformation in Aśoka's household that both his son Mahendra, and his daughter Sanghamitrā forsook the world and entered the Buddhist Sangha as members. On the request of King Tissa of Ceylon Aśoka sent a mission to Ceylon under his son, Mahendra and Sumana, the son of Sanghamitrā (about 250 B.C.). On a second request he sent his daughter Sanghamitrā with a branch of the sacred Bodhi-tree which was

despatched to Tāmralipti harbour under the escort of an army led by Aśoka. Aśoka himself carried the branch on his head and took it to the ship in breast-deep water. The branch of the Bodhi-tree was then carried to Ceylon. The Buddhist stūpa at Sāñci shows in two reliefs the carrying of the bo-tree from Uruvela to Ceylon. There is also a fresco at Ajanta depicting this episode of the ascetic pair taking the Way of the Dhamma to Ceylon. The entry of Buddhism into Ceylon was also the entry of civilization. India gave to Ceylon not only religion but also her irrigation system and the arts of sculpture and architecture, and the island still worships with gratitude and reverence the gentle ascetic prince in a rock-hewn relief and tomb; not far from the ancient sacred city of Anuradhapura built by Tissa and his successors with its vast numbers of sanghārāms, parks, baths and palaces. Ceylonese chronicles also state that Aśoka's mission went to Suvarṇabhūmi, i.e., Burma and perhaps to the islands of the East Indies.

The Propagation of a Universal Moral Code

Aśoka's combination of statesmanship with righteousness is also abundantly evident from the manner of his preaching of Dharma. The Bhabru edict in Jaipur State definitely indicates Aśoka's predilection for, if not adherence to, the dhamma of Śākya-muni, since it refers to the seven discourses on the Dhamma to be constantly pondered over by the Bhikkhus and Upāsakas adding: "whatever is said by the Buddha, the gifted Master, is well said indeed; thus verily the good faith will be long enduring". For the propagation of the Buddhist doctrines Aśoka utilised the contemporary collection of the Buddha's discourses—the Dhammapariyāya. Some of his pillar edicts comprise a general injunction for the "unfrocking" of the schismatic monks and nuns of the Sangha. Such was his zeal in maintaining the purity of the Buddha's religion. According to the Divyāvadāna, the Emperor went on pilgrimage to such Buddhist holy places as the Lumbini Garden, Kapilavastu, Buddha-Gayā and Rishipattana (Sārṇāth) establishing permanent monuments at these spots. Besides he also visited the site of Koṇakamana. Though he was a Buddha-bhāgavata, in intimate touch with the Buddhist Sangha, yet what Aśoka preached to the people is not any narrow creed of Buddhism but the Universal Dharma comprising the essence or sāra

of all religions. He set forth the goals of neither nirvāṇa nor sambodhi but a universal code of duties and obligations following the ancient norm (porana pakiti). In a famous passage of the Sāmyutta Nikāya we read that the Buddha was no renovator but only traversed the eternal way, and only revived the primeval, omnipresent cosmic law. Dharma in Vedic literature is Rita or the cosmic binding order, the eternal truth holding its sway over the universe, in the words of the Arthaśāstra. Buddhism emphasised both the metaphysical and moral aspects of Dharma. Dharma analysis here is "the discernment of an eternal, orderly, conditioned sequence of things" in the words of the Suttapiṭaka. Dharma practice in Buddhism is the Law of Altruism, complete, balanced and practical, as embodied in the Eight-fold Āryan Path, and based on the laws of unity, continuity, metempsychosis and transience. Aśoka followed the footsteps of the Buddha in emphasising the ancient norm. He spoke of svarga as the goal for the common people and not of any nirvāṇic calm, and called himself the beloved of the devas or Hindu gods in order to bring his universal moral principles home to the great bulk of his Hindu subject population. Toleration is the key-word in the Dharma of the Aśokan edicts, grounded in "restraint from speaking well of one's own sect and ill of others". In Edict XII we read: "His sacred and gracious majesty the King does reverence to men of all sects whether ascetics or householders, by gifts and various forms of reverence. The man who praises his own particular form of religion and sneers at that of others, merely in order to enhance his own, in reality inflicts upon it the most grievous injury. Concord, then, is meritorious, to wit, hearkening willingly to the Law of Piety as accepted by other people". In a vast country, comprising people in various stages of culture and worshipping various gods and goddesses, Aśoka had the genius and acumen to realise that gifts or outward forms of respect are far less significant than the essentials of religion and the spirit of forbearance and toleration and that moral propagandism (dharma-vijaya) could only succeed on the basis of wide outlook (bahuka), and the interpretation of Dharma in its comprehensive sense acceptable to all the religions, Brahmanism, Jainism or Buddhism. Aśoka declared himself a friend of the devas, Brāhmaṇas and ascetics of different orders. Likewise the Aśokan edicts insist upon the recognition of the

sanctity of animal life as the absolute duty of persons of all faiths and beliefs. This again was going back to the ancient norm. The Buddha devoted his whole life's preaching to wean Brāhmaṇism from the most elaborate and complex sacrifices involving violence towards living creatures. Frankly did the Rock Edict IX protest against empty ceremonialism. The Edict says: "People perform various ceremonies (mangalam). In troubles, marriages of sons and daughters, births of children, departures from home—on these and other (occasions) people perform many ceremonies. But in such (cases) mothers and wives perform numerous ceremonies, and diverse, petty and worthless ceremonies, Now ceremonies should certainly be performed. But these bear little fruit. That, however, is productive of great fruit which is connected with Dharma. Herein are these: proper treatment of slaves and workers (dāsa-bhatakari samya-patipati), reverence to teachers, restraint of violence towards living creatures, and liberality to Brāhmaṇ and Śramaṇa ascetics". This is the Dharma described in a nutshell.

Amelioration of the Condition of Slaves and Agricultural Labourers

In the Mauryan age the lot of the slaves (dāsas) and the agricultural labourers (bhataka, bhatika) became miserable though, it must be added, it was better than that of the Greek slaves. In the Jātakas we often read of slaves and slave girls being treated as members of the family, but also of slaves, male and female, being "beaten, chained, branded and fed in slave's rationing at the slightest fault", the conventional price of a slave being 100 kahāpaṇas. The Buddha exhorted their humane treatment as recorded in the Sigālovāda Suttanta, which has already been quoted. In the Arthaśāstra, Kauṭilya mentions that it was a punishable offence to defraud a slave of his property, and privileges, and to hurt, abuse or wrongfully employ him, and there were also regulations according to which a slave could become free by payment of ransom. It was one of the duties of the king to correct those who neglected their duty towards slaves. In fact Kauṭilya was on the whole bent towards the manumission or abolition of slave labour as a matter of economic policy. He also indicates the following measures of protection of day labourers or hirelings (karmakāras, bhṛtakas). Wages should be

determined by the nature of the work and the time taken in doing it according to agreement between the employer and the worker which should be made known to neighbours. Non-payment of such wages is punished by fines. The bhaṭaka or bhaṭikaraka is entitled to his wages (vetana) and also to concessions if he is disabled (aśaktah), assigned to dirty job (kutsita karma) or is ill and distressed. Aśoka's insistence upon the proper treatment of slaves and workers, that indeed closely follows the Buddha's injunction and Kauṭilya's or Āpastamba's liberal policy, was underlined by the multiplication of slaves and landless labourers, whose numbers were very large, and whose ranks were swelled by the peasant farmers giving up their holdings and the rise of the new rich owners of millions (eighty crores, asitikoṭivibhava) the kuṭumbikas, seṭṭhis and gāmabhojakas, who began to acquire lands on a vast scale and worked them by means of slave and hired labour. As in Western Europe, prior to the Industrial Revolution, urban capitalism and agricultural finance entered into sinister combination and acquired interest in the land, bringing down the economic status of the workers who tilled the land for their masters for a morsel of rice or barley and a small cash. The hireling or day labourer became, indeed, a term of opprobrium; he was not entitled to the amenities that even slaves could enjoy. His diet is rice-ball (kummāsa-piṇḍa) or barley cooked in the manner of rice with little soup (appasūpam yavabhattam) and he obtains "a māsaka or half-māsaka for wages in cash by which he can hardly support his mother". Elsewhere we read that a water-carrier who earns half-māsaka a day could also lay by something; he hides his saving in the brick joints of the rampart. The Arthaśāstra fixed wages at a paṇa (kahāpaṇa) and a quarter per mensem (16 māsakas equal to 1 kahāpaṇa; Kauṭilya uses the form paṇa) i.e., 20 māsakas per mensem or two-third māsaka per diem for slaves, agricultural labourers and field watchmen.

The lowest daily wages of a royal servant in the city of Pāṭaliputra according to Kauṭilya, is 1 kahāpaṇa (copper), while skilled workers obtain 2 kahāpaṇas per diem. (Manu's rate is also 1 paṇa or 16 māsakas for the unskilled workers together with 1 drona or 4 ādhakas of rice once a month and clothes after six months). The disparity in the standard of living between the Ārya and the Avara or low-caste worker is definitely indicated

by Kauṭilya as follows: "One prastha of rice, pure and unsplit, one-fourth part of sūpa, and clarified butter or oil equal to one-fourth part of sūpa will suffice to form one meal of an Ārya. One-sixth prastha of sūpa for a man, and half the above quantity of ghee will form one meal for a man of low caste (avara) or dāsa. Three-fourths of the same ration will be the food of women; and half of that will be for children". In the Vinaya we find that one copper kahāpaṇa can buy enough quantities of meat and green grocery for a single person, and a small quantity of ghee or oil can be had for that sum. One kahāpaṇa buys coarse chīvaras for monks and nuns according to the Jātakas. One half to one māsaka is the day labourer's wage, frequently mentioned in the Jātakas while Kauṭilya fixed $2/3$ māsaka as the wage for the agricultural worker. As regards his luxuries a water-carrier and his wife, it is mentioned in one of the Jātakas, pool their saving together with one māsaka and want to have a spree, "buy a garland with one part of it, perfume with another and a strong drink with a third".

If parrots ravage a rice field that is being watched by the field labourer, "the Brāhmaṇa will have a price put on the rice and debit it from his (wages) account". When wages are not previously fixed a tiller of the soil obtains $1/10$ th of the crop grown, a herdsman $1/10$ th of the butter clarified and a pedlar $1/10$ th of the sale proceeds, according to the Arthaśāstra. In the Milinda-pañho the bhatikas are assigned the lowest status among the workers, even lower than that of the slaves (dāsaputtas). It is no wonder then that the Aśokan code of morality emphasises as much the sacredness of the lower animal life as just and humane relations between employer and worker, and the abolition of exploitation in any form which is the real meaning of Dharma. In one edict he indeed refers to his various kindnesses and good deeds and observes, "To man his highest gift has been the gift of Dharma (dharma-dānam) and of spiritual insight, while to the lower animal world it was the gift of life (prāṇa-dakṣiṇā)".

The New Liberal Humanism

An emperor, whose palace is converted into a vihāra and whose children have taken to the homeless life, and yet who holds charge of one of the biggest kingdoms of the world in his time, introduces Dharma into every sphere of life—dharma in his

dealings with the have-nots, the slaves, the working folk, the criminal tribes and the forest peoples and dharma also in relations with other states and peoples, big or small, near or distant. Thus does Dharmāśoka sum up his enduring message by saying that he wants the aims and happiness of the people to be regulated by Dharma, and the people also to grow day by day in their reliance upon Dharma and their ardour for Dharma. The external regulation of Dharma through precepts and prohibitions is, however, he concludes, far less efficacious than the inner regulation through meditation and spiritual insight. In the last years of his reign Dharmāśoka appears to have been more convinced than before about the need of inner illumination, thought-power (*nijhatiyā*) and will power (*parākrama*) of man. In this Aśoka goes back to the ancient Vedic wisdom, and justifies his title, *Devānāmpriya*, the "beloved of the devas" of Hinduism. Aśoka lays claim to his dharma-vijaya over the kingdoms of his Ceylonese, South Indian and Hellenistic neighbours. There is no doubt that Buddhism spread in some measure, and Buddhist saṅghas and humanitarian institutions were planted in his reign in Western Asia. The *Mahavamśa* refers to the Buddhist missionary enterprise in the country of the Yonas, where the monk Mahārakkhita "delivered in the midst of the people the *kāla Karama Suttanta*". As the result of this 170,000 living creatures attained to the reward of the path, and 10,000 received the *pabbajjā*. Not only did Emperor Aśoka achieve the consolidation of a vast Indian Empire based on a unified Indian culture, but he also spread the message of universal peace and concord to the independent Dravidian countries of the South and to the Greek rulers of Asia. Aśoka was the first Indian monarch to place India on the map of the civilised world and bring to bear contemporary Western i.e., Hellenic-Achæmenian influences upon Indian art and culture. Aśoka was the first among India's great internationalists.

The reign of Aśoka, who by his Dharma-vijaya consolidated the largest empire founded in India, including territories in the centre, north and north-west and incorporating Gāndhāra and Kashmir and the Deccan as far south as Mysore, was dominated in every detail by the ideal and practice of Buddhism, interpreted not as a narrow state region but as a liberal, humanistic creed. Aśoka's stress of a universal code of Dharma was entirely

congruent with the needs of the highly centralised administration of a vast empire, of the expanding trade and commerce and of the social levelling associated with the assimilation of non-Āryan peoples, the decline of Brahmanical ascendancy and the meeting together of the Persian, Central Asian and Indian races in the Mauryan Age. Such diffusion of universal morality, as contrasted with "the diverse, petty and worthless rites and ceremonies in popular vogue, especially among the women-folk" as well as animal sacrifices which Aśoka unequivocally condemned, had almost the sanction of the law of the Mauryan state behind it. Within two centuries that elapsed between the death of the Buddha and the conversion of Aśoka, a humane religion became the faith and practice of the people, spreading goodwill and compassion to animals, to slaves, agricultural labourers and the have-nots, to the savage tribes of the forests and to big and small neighbouring states so that there were security and justice all round. In the flowing tide of a new liberal humanism it was not the Buddhist Nīrvāṇa but the more ancient, tolerant universal code of duties and obligations (porana pakiti) that the Mauryan emperor bestowed to the Indian common man through his numerous rock and pillar edicts.

The Piety and Serenity of the World's Earliest Religious Art

There was a tremendous release of popular feeling and imagination, expressing itself in the art and religion of the Mauryan period. Various gods and goddesses of rural India, such as Devatās, Yakshas and Yakshīs, Nāgās, Nāginīs, Gandharvas and fertility spirits, Kubera, guardian of the North and chief of the Yakshas, Virūpāksha, guardian of the West, Dhṛtarāshṭra, guardian of the East, Virūdhakha, guardian of the South, Sirima Devatā, goddess of fortune, Vṛkshakā, guardian of trees Sudarśanā, guardian of still waters, and Manasā, perhaps Earth-goddess or Mother-goddess, came to be included in the Buddhist pantheon. Some of these are depicted on the toraṇa-pillars and railings in Bhārhut, Sāñchī, Bodh-Gayā and Batanmara. At Sāñchī we have also the figure of Gaja-Lakshmī. Earth, tree and water spirits are swaying, graceful and dynamic, but the following rhythm is circumscribed so that one feels that their energies do not overstep their limited abodes. On the other hand, the colossal Parkham, Besnagar and Dīdārganj Yakshas, dating from

the 3rd century B.C., are magnificently executed, embodying a stupendous quantity of physical or earthly energy that is captured by the stone and seems to burst out of it. The popular Brahmanical gods and godlings, who found their way deliberately or unconsciously into the service of the new religion, suggest neither introspection nor faith; they are spirits of the earth, vegetation and water, and of a human or fairy world, not yet moralised or spiritualised. Soon it is not the cults of the soil, tree and water but the cult of Man that monopolises artistic feeling and enthusiasm, and Indian art enters its most significant, formative period, dealing with the theme of the lives and enlightenment of the Buddha in a grand epic and missionary and yet tender and intimate style.

Contrasted with the ancient Yakshas and Yakshīs, deities of physical energy and plentiness, are the numerous devout figures of kings, queens, nobles, merchants and common men and women which Buddhism invested with a new depth and radiance in the decorations of the Buddhist stūpa. The stūpa, ancient burial mound, built in honour of a hero or a saint, came to symbolise in early Buddhism the Parinirvāṇa of the Buddha as the Wheel represented his first sermon, the goblins or courtesans before a tree the Temptation, the horse the Renunciation and the āśvattha tree the Great Enlightenment. The stūpa was the place of pilgrimage of thousands, enshrining as it did the relics of the Buddha and of his disciples and was encircled by a railed-in terrace for circumambulation. It was the four gateways at the four cardinal points and the railings, pillars and archways that gave the pious kings, noble merchants (gahapatis) and guilds of craftsmen and artists opportunities for display of beneficence, devotion and craftsmanship. The Sāṅchī, Bhārhut and Bodh-Gayā railings, gateways and balustrades are concerned with the Buddhist Jātaka stories, dealing with the common incidents of animal and human life with a new piety and devotion that completely transforms mundane existence. Reliefs showing the miraculous conception of Māyādevī and the descent of the White Elephant in the silent hour of the night, the miracles of the Buddha quenching the sacred fire and walking on the river, the gift of the Jetavana, the worship of the Buddha by the Nāga king, the Parinirvāṇa and the visit of Aśoka to the Stūpa of Rāmagrāma, are all pervaded by a passionate devotion to the Buddha,

expressed in the easy flow of kneeling and bowing attitudes of persons or groups of persons, animals and trees integrated together in a well-balanced dynamic composition. The concentration of faith in a spiritual and unseen power articulates itself sometimes in a densely packed but balanced grouping, sometimes in quiet and elegant movements of a few sparsely modelled figures, well-fitted into the static serenity of the scenes. The earliest religious art of the world in the Mauryan-Sunga reliefs is a triumph of serenity, introspection and devotion.

Equally significant in the art of Sāñchī and Bhārhut is the feeling of one-ness of all sentient life, which is the Buddha's precious gift to the Indian man. Elephants, lions, horses, deer and buffaloes participate in the achievements of the Buddha that are intended for all creation and depicted with great feeling or tenderness. Particularly sacred and superbly drawn are the large numbers of young elephants, horses and lions, the elephant symbolising the Nativity, the horse the Renunciation and the lion the Power and Majesty of Buddha-ship. Animal sculpture has shown a naturalistic vigour, freshness and innocence at their highest in India. As many as thirty Jātaka legends are illustrated at Bhārhut—folk stories and animal legends coming from the heart of the masses but now impregnated with a profoundly rich moral purpose and a sense of kinship of all life. In the entire range of development of Indian sculptures there are few works in stone that may be compared with those of Sāñchī depicting the adoration of the Buddha by the herd of wild elephants, the sermon in the Deer Park with its assemblage of anchorites and animals, or the Jātaka stories of the elephant and monkey Bodhisattva in their expression of tender feeling for the lower animal creation and for nature, born of Jain and Buddhist metaphysics. The Indian forest, saturated by the Jātaka feeling of infinite sympathy with all sentient beings, shines forth in the Sāñchī animal reliefs as the sacred mansion of the multi-born Bodhisattva. Not even Hellenic art of the classic period has treated animal and man, fruit, flower and foliage with such naturalistic delight, incisiveness and freedom.

The Symbols of Buddhist Iconography

It is true that Buddhism preached the total abnegation of desire and enjoyment and decried art and beauty. The Dāsa-

Dhamma Sutta observes: "Beauty is nothing to me, neither the beauty of the body, nor that which comes of dress Sound, taste, smell, touch, these intoxicate human beings: cut off the yearning inherent in them". Buddhism forbade the delineation of the human form or expressing delight and even interest in it. But this was only a religious scruple and injunction. In artistic imagination even the foot-prints, tree, wheel, umbrella and the throne-motif could convey the Buddha's divinity and express the pent-up religious emotions that broke out of the solid mass of pillars and railings. Or the Buddha was not shown at all even by a concrete symbol, but a profound atmosphere of spirituality could be created by delicate and pious movements and gestures. In the narration of the Jetavana Jātaka story on the railing post both at Bhārhut and Bodh-Gayā, neither the Master nor any symbol, by which he is usually represented, appears. Yet the sacredness as well as the munificence of the millionaire's gifts are adequately expressed by the massive and well-balanced compositions and the rhythm of movement of the full-limbed figures and their animated poses. Symbols, like the foot-prints sometimes move about in the same relief, dramatically participating in the story-telling. Thus at Bhārhut Buddha's gradual descent from heaven is brought home to the devout crowd by marking with foot-prints the topmost as well as the lowermost rung of Heaven's ladder and the devices of the Bodhi-drum and the altar decorated with flowers. The combination of symbols reinforces the narration as well as the upsurge of religious feeling. It is characteristic that due to the taboo on the representation of the Buddha's image, and also perhaps to the innate love of the Indian craftsman of modelling animals the early religious art of India (about 2nd century B.C.) depicted the Buddha in his previous births in the forms of various animals following the Jātakas. It was somewhat later (about 1st century B.C.) that the four Great Miracles—Birth, Renunciation, Enlightenment and the first Teaching—Death and other great events of his earthly life came to be represented through the use of various symbols. The large variety of symbols, motifs and conventions, some of which are probably ancient symbols of "the Fertile Crescent", constituted, indeed, a most forceful vocabulary in Buddhist iconography. Often the plastic language also takes delight in depicting scenes of the common

man's daily routine, of enjoyment and luxury, of kingly pomp and procession in prolific sensuousness, true to the Indian vision of human life and destiny as an integral part of a cosmic scheme, which is much older than the experience of enlightenment of the Buddha. As we see king Śuddhodana going out of Kapilavastu to meet his Parivrajaka son, Bimbisāra proceeding on a visit from the imperial capital to meet the Buddha, or Aśoka's pilgrimage to the stūpa of Rāmagrāma and the Bodhi tree at Gayā, we are also again and again reminded of the ancient Indian experience of the supremacy of Brahmanical wisdom and saintliness (Brahma-balaṃ) over Kshatriya power and majesty (Kshatriya-balaṃ). There were authentic historical scenes depicted at Sāñchī, full of ancient memories and pious associations.

The Folk and the Civic Art of Buddhism

The emphasis in Buddhism of the moral grandeur of man and his symbiosis with Nature and all sentient existence abolished the barrier between the earthly and the spiritual, overcame all restriction of expression by sheer exaltation of feeling and striving, and played the decisive role in the development of Indian art. The sculpture of Sāñchī is in particular spontaneously and exuberantly naturalistic and brimful of the joy of life that spills from the Foot-prints, the Wheel and the Tree of the Buddha, and enters into the pious disciple, the elephant, the deer, the monkey and the peacock of the Buddhist world, and finally into the fresh, voluptuous limbs of the Yakshī. The popular godling, with her heaving breasts, swaying like a mango-blossom under the canopy of the mango-tree, is spiritualised by the Buddhist kinship and affection towards the whole universe. So she swings at Sāñchī as the guardian of the gateway, forming a bracket to the architrave as thousands of Buddhist pilgrims pass under her, while circumambulating the stūpa. Thus is the Yakshī, a tutelary deity of popular faith and imagination, transformed by Sāñchī in the Mauryan age into the angelic, frolicsome guardian of the Buddha's Citadel. Both Bhārhut and Sāñchī represent a phase of Indian religious evolution in which the ancient widespread folk cults of Yakshas and Yakshīs, tutelary gods and godlings of forest and village life, of trees and serpents and of fertility spirits are not dismissed as irrelevant and superstitious,

but have come under the ambit of, and been subordinated to the message of the Great Illumination. The Buddha under the Bodhi tree simply replaces the Vṛksha-devatā to whom the maid Sujātā used to bring daily her offering of milk-rice; and thus the Bhārhut and Sāñchī sculptors had no compunction in representing the various trees under which the Manushi-Buddhas sat for their enlightenment. The cult of trees and fertility spirits, handed down from the Indus valley culture to the common people, becomes the handmaid of the new philosophy.

Art aids the higher religion to absorb the gods and spirits not only of the older popular faiths, Yakshas, Nāgas, Vṛksha-devatās, Apsarās and Kinnaras but also such Brahmanical deities as Indra, Sūrya and Lakshmi, who are equally to be found in the reliefs of Bhārhut and Bodh-Gayā. All folk-gods and godlings remain as worshippers or guardians of the Buddha; while the troop of singing and dancing Apsarās and Gandharvas of Hinduism is not eschewed by art through puritanical zeal. From the viewpoint of artistic treatment, Bhārhut, Sāñchī, Mathurā, and Bodh-Gayā and the Chaitya-cave at Bhājā represent a tradition of symbolism and conventional iconography as well as a flowing linear rhythm and intuition of composition that matured later at Mathurā, Sārnāth, Amarāvati, Ajantā and Ellorā. Nor were the skill, workmanship and technology in Mauryan sculpture less significant. The Aśokan columns, large monoliths of polished stone with their lion, bull, horse or elephant capitals, are marvels of workmanship, characterised by precision of modelling, stylistic finish and brilliant polish that have won the admiration of modern Western sculptors. It is probable that Aśoka did not originate the Aśokan columns inscribed with his edicts. For he says in one of his rock inscriptions: "Edicts are to be inscribed on rocks both here and in distant places. But wherever a stone pillar is standing they must be inscribed on that stone pillar." Aśoka's imperial palace at Pāṭaliputra elicited the wonder and awe of Hiuen-Tsang who observed that the colossal stones with their superb carving were the work of no mortal hands. The imperial metropolitan art of Aśoka, combining marvellous technical proficiency and refinement with systematic vigour and dignity in modelling, harnessed the universal principles of Dhamma and the more profane ideal of paramount Mauryan sovereignty for the establishment of a

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secular-cum-Dharmarājya throughout the length and breadth of the sub-continent and beyond. Not before Aśoka was art lifted to such noble moral purpose, nor was it utilised for such universal and expansive political and social aims. But the imperial sculptors at Sārnāth or elsewhere could not excel the sculptors of Bhārhut and Sāñchī in the modelling of the splendid young elephants, horses and lions, far more successful than the cold hieratic figures on the Aśokan pillars influenced by a Persepolitan art. The range and depth of Aśokan art fall far short of the generic Buddhist art of the Mauryan period as represented by Bhārhut, Sāñchī and Bodh-Gayā and the early Chaitya caves in Western India. These latter represent not a civic art, nor merely a religious art, but an art per se expressing the totality of contemporary human life and experience in India in its prolific realism and sensuousness.

CHAPTER X

INDO-HELLENISM: YAVANA ELEMENTS IN INDIAN CULTURE AND ART

Causes of the Fall of the Maurya Empire

The Mauryan Empire fell soon after the death of Aśoka (230 B.C.). Disintegration began with one of Aśoka's sons making himself independent in the north-west. Kuṇāla and later on his sons were rulers of Pāṭaliputra and Ujjain. The disintegration of the Maurya Empire encouraged Antiochos the Great, (220-107 B.C.) to invade the Indus Valley. Subhāgasena, who was a ruler in the north-west, placated him with the gift of a number of elephants. According to one evidence the Greek King Demetrius pushed into the Ganges Valley as far as Pāṭaliputra.

The causes of the decline of the Maurya Empire are not far to seek. Buddhism and Jainism by their encouragement of the elite of the country to embrace the homeless life, no doubt, contributed towards lowering the quality of the racial stock and the standards of efficiency and morals in every field. Chāṇakya's attempt to revive the ancient principles of varṇāśrama and the obligations of marriage, family and society could not succeed against the tides of Asceticism, Jainism and Buddhism. As a reaction against the wide-spread monachism we find the luxury and indulgence of both the Kshatriya nobility and the rich Śeṭṭhis and Kuṭumbikas. The vast wealth that flowed into the North Indian cities from the trade with the Golden Chersonese and Central and Western Asia, and the concentration of wealth in the hands of the princes, nobles and landholders (gahapatis), both Vaiśyas and Brāhmaṇs, as well as the opportunity for exploitation of large numbers of slaves and agricultural labourers (dāsa-bhaṭakas) had their demoralising influences.

Maurya administration was highly centralised and bureaucratic and grounded on state economic monopoly or control and a large variety of direct and indirect taxes, cesses and levies that must have proved a heavy burden on the population. In the

Maurya empire there were oppressive taxes like *kara*, *vishi* or *praṇaya*, forms of forced labour or benevolences which could be imposed by oppressive *Samāhartās* from villages or by kings facing a depleted treasury. These levies and cesses, included in the list of *rāshṭra* revenue, were the opportunities for greedy and corrupt officials when imperial supervision became lax. "There are", says *Kauṭilya*, "about forty ways of embezzlement; what is realised later is entered later on; what is realised later is entered earlier; what ought to be realised is not realised". Neither the elaborate system of spies or detectives set up over ministers and officers of all grades, nor the regular tour of inspection by *mahāmātras* instituted by *Aśoka* for dealing with official corruption, could check the oppression of the people. The *Divyāvadāna* refers to the rebellion of *Taxilā* where *Kunāla* who goes as Viceroy is told that the people are hostile neither to the Prince nor to *Aśoka* but cannot endure the oppression of the wicked ministers (*Duṣṭāmātyāh*). In one of the *Jātakas* we read that the tax-gatherer (*Niggahaka*), ordered by the king, plunders the wealth like a robber without fear. A king raises fines, corvees, cattle taxes and cash levies and crushes his subjects like sugar-canes in a mill. One of the last Maurya emperors, *Śāliśūka*, is described as wicked, cruel and unrighteous; and what a wicked king may do is described by one of the *Jātakas* in the form of a prophecy: "he shall set the whole country folk to work for him; for the king's sake shall the oppressed people, leaving their own work, sow early and late crops, keep watch, reap, thresh and garner, plant sugarcanes, make and drive sugar mills, boil molasses, lay out gardens and orchards. And as they gather in all diverse kinds of produce to fill the royal garner, they shall not give so much as a glance to their empty barns at home". According to tradition the oppression of high officials, especially in the outlying provinces that could not be effectively checked by the periodic tours of inspection of the *Mahāmātras*, twice led to popular revolts in *Taxila* in the times of *Binduśāra* and *Aśoka*, and perhaps also in *Ujjain* and *Kaliṅga* in *Aśoka*'s reign. The ancient village *gramaṇi* became greedy, obnoxious and oppressive styling himself *Gāmaḥojaka* or *Gāmasamiko*. He conspired with thieves for appropriating revenues as well as fines collected for the king and took bribes in adjudicating village disputes. Sometimes he became fabulously rich acquiring

millions (aṣītikoti dhanam) by dishonest means. "He knows not that there are kings in the land".

The inequality and maldistribution of land and wealth became no doubt pronounced in the late Maurya period. There was also wide-spread corruption in the monasteries into which "wealth and honour flowed like the five rivers", undermining ascetic purity and austerity of living. Monks maintained slaves and servants who begged alms on their behalf and began to live a life of comfort and luxury. In the fraternity there was also a large number of imposters (śātha māyāvina), rogues and criminals who took to monkhood as a way of living. Many monks and nuns became rich enough to make religious donations and endowments. Bühler observes with reference to certain donations for the Sāñchī topes: "They may have obtained by begging the money required for making the rails and pillars. This was no doubt permissible, as the purpose was a pious one. But it is interesting to note the different proceedings of the Jaina ascetics who according to the Mathurā and other inscriptions, as a rule were content to exhort the laymen to make donations and to take care that this fact was mentioned in the votive inscriptions". The strong, efficient and consolidated Maurya empire was not only corroded from within, but also disintegrated through the secession of Kashmir and the Kabul valley in the north-west, and Berār in its south-west flank inviting Greek invasions of the interior even up to the door of the imperial capital. Finally, the Maurya army which ceased to hear the sound of bherī for about three decades became itself ease-loving and luxurious. And it is no wonder that the Maurya emperor's commander-in-chief, Pushyamitra or Pushpamitra Śuṅga, slayed him in about 185 B.C. in the very presence of the imperial army. Perhaps the general discontent encouraged the coup.

The Śuṅga dynasty was the focus of a new Brahmanical revival and resistance against the swelling, expanding tide of the "viciously valiant barbarians", the Greeks who challenged the arms of Magadha for the mastery of Northern India, and whom the later Mauryas (dubbed as "asuras" by certain epic and purāṇic writers) could not stem. The great scholar and grammarian, Patañjali, author of the Mahābhāṣya, the famous commentary on Pāṇini's grammatical aphorisms, was a contemporary of Pushyamitra and contributed a great deal towards the replacement of

the Pāli of Emperor Aśoka's time by Sanskrit. A considerable body of Brahmanical literature, including parts of the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, the original Purāṇa and the Mānavadharmasāstra, is usually regarded as being produced in the Śuṅga period. Pushyamitra Śuṅga revived the great Vedic horse sacrifice as a symbol of world suzerainty, in which Patañjali himself probably officiated as a priest (iha Pushyamitraṁ yājayāmaḥ). Patañjali mentions not only such elaborate sacrifices as Rājasūya and Vājapeya, but also the daily Panchamātra yajñas; which he states ought to be performed by every householder. It is of interest to note also that he specially speaks of animal sacrifices to the god Rudra. The rehabilitation of Vedic sacred rites and ceremonies, sacerdotalism and Brahmanical authority, the rise of the Kṛishṇa-Bhāgavatism as evidenced by the popularity of plays of Kaṁsavadhā and Balibandha, and even the persecution of the Buddhists were features of the return to Brahmanical orthodoxy during the Śuṅga times. But Buddhism was not under a cloud for long; as some magnificent Buddhist monuments were erected in the kingdom of the Śuṅgas. Pushyamitra Śuṅga's dominion extended up to Śākala in the north-west and the river Narmadā on the South. Both Pāṭaliputra and Vidiśā were the seats of Śuṅga imperial administration.

The Aryanisation of the Greek Kings of the North-west

Let us now turn to the north-west whence the menace of the Greeks was coming. The Mauryan and Syrian empires disintegrated almost simultaneously. Parthia and Bactria or Balkh, under Arsaces and Diodotus respectively, seceded from the Seleucidan empire. Demetrius, ruler of Bactria, crossed the Indian frontier and occupied Gāndhāra and a considerable portion of the Punjab and Sind. In course of time the Greek kings of the Punjab became thoroughly Indianised, and many Greeks domiciled in the north-west became Buddhists or Hindu Bhāgavatas and assumed Indian names. The shining example is Heliodorus, the son of Diya (Dion) and a native of Taxila who erected the garuḍa column at Vidiśā in honour of Vāsudeva, the god of gods. The Greek ambassador's familiarity with the Mahābhārata is remarkable; for the inscription repeats the Mahābhārata stress of dama (self-discipline), tyāga

(renunciation) and *apramāda* (alertness) as leading to immortality (Mahābhārata, XI, 7, 23). Demetrius (*Dattāmitra* of the Mahābhārata) and Eucratides issued coins bearing legends in Brāhmī or Kharosthī characters. A few years later Menander (110-160 B.C.), who probably belonged to the house of the former, reigned gloriously in Śākala or Sāgala (modern Sialkot), his kingdom extending beyond the river Beas. *Antialikita* (*Antialkidās*) was the ruler of Taxila in Gāndhāra. It was he who sent Heliodora (*Heliodorus*), son of Diya (*Dion*), to the court at Vidiśā. Menander was of course the greatest among the Indo-Greek kings of the north-west. He is sometimes identified with the Yavana *rāj(a)* *D(i)mi(ta)* of the famous Hathīgumphā inscription of Kharavela (about the 1st century B.C.). His kingdom extended from the Punjab to Saurāshṭra and the western coast of India, and in one of his adventures he occupied Mathurā, besieged Mādhyamikā (near Chitor) in Rajputana and Sāketa in Oudh and even threatened Pāṭaliputra. "The Yavanas were besieging Sāketa and Mādhyamikā", writes Patañjali. "When the viciously valiant Yavanas," mentions the author of the Gārgī Samhitā, "after reducing Sāketa, the Pañchāla country and Mathurā, and reach Kusumadhvaṇya (the royal capital of Pāṭaliputra), the land falls into chaos" The Mālavikāgnimitra also refers to the Yavana invasion of either Demetrios or Menander. A silver coin of Menander was discovered recently in Sāmbhar in Rājputānā. But the invasion was repelled. The final defeat of the Yavanas was inflicted on the banks of the Sindhu, the tributary of the Chambal in Gwalior, by the grandson of Pushyamitra (about 187-151 B.C.). On this river stood Agnimitra's far-famed capital Padmāvati. Two horse-sacrifices were performed by Pushyamitra, symbols of defence of Brahmanical culture against the barbarians and establishment of a new Brahmanical empire.

Thus did India prevent the Greeks from becoming the successors of the Maurya empire. The Greeks, such as Heliokles, Antialkidas and Menander, though they ruled over north-western India for about a century and a half and pushed into the Ganges Valley, had to retrace their steps because of internecine strife in their own north-western territory and the onrush of the Parthians or Pahlavas. But these Greeks were not really Yavanas but became Aryanised in their new homeland.

The Conversion of the Yavanas into Buddhism.

A shining example was the Hellenic ruler of the Indian north-western border land, Menander, (about 155 B. C.) who, like Aśoka was first an invader and conqueror and then a pacifist and lover of Buddhist Dhamma. Menander is called Mahārāja Minadra in a Pṛkrit Kharoshthī inscription found at Bājaura (in the North-west Frontier Province) where a stone casket refers to the consecration of a relic of the Buddha. His empire extended from the Kabul to the Ganges valley as far east as Mathurā and to the Arabian sea including the famous port of Barygāzā. Menander, the Milinda of Buddhist literature, used to hold philosophical discourses with learned Brāhmaṇas and ascetics and often defeated them by his superior wisdom and skill in disputation. But when the great Buddhist sage Nāgasena visited his court at Śākala (Sangala of the Alexandrian geographers, Euthydemia of king Demetrius and modern Sialkōt in the Punjab), with his retinue of monks, "lighting up the city with their yellow robes like lamps and bringing down upon it the breezes from the heights where the sages dwell", he was converted to Buddhism. One of Menander's beautiful coins appropriately bears the Buddhist dharmachakra. Nāgasena is one of the best types of Buddhist monk-teachers, serene, detached and logical. "The Questions of Milinda" (Milinda Pañho) represents a philosophical dialogue between king Menander and the monk Nāgasena, the latter giving an exposition of the illusory character of the human ego, and is the first text of Buddhist philosophy handed down to us. It is a master-piece of metaphysical argumentation and use of dialectic, exhibiting a combination of Indian philosophical idealism with the Socratic spirit and method of enquiry, and echoing the arguments employed by the Buddhist missionaries in converting the Yavanas. On the eve of the flood-tide of devotionism and worship of the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas and of the sacred relics, that swept north-west India and Gandhāra in the first and second centuries A.D., and gradually transplanted there the second holy land of Buddhism, the Milinda Pañho by a happy blend of the spirit of the Upanishadic Rishi and the Greek Socrates discounts all forms of idolatry. King Milinda asks the monk: "What is the good of setting up a mound to contain the jewel-treasure of the corporeal relics

(śarīradhātu) of the Tathāgata by way of reverence or gift, though he has died away and accepts it not?" The monk also explains that the Buddha had enjoined that the seeker after truth should practise discipline and meditation instead of worshipping his relics (śarīra-pūjā) and remarks: "And if, O King, he had not said so, then would the Bhikkhus have taken his bowl and his robe, and occupied themselves with paying reverence to the Buddha through them."

But the Milinda Pañho is intended for the philosopher-king and not for the masses who would love and adore the great ascetic (mahāśramaṇa) as the Great Compassionate One (mahākāruṇika). Menander is, indeed one of the romantic figures in early Indian history. Though his cavalry over-ran Kāthiāwār, Rājputānā and the Ganges Valley and all but succeeded in capturing the Śuṅga capital, Pāṭaliputra, he like Aśoka underwent a complete moral and spiritual transformation under the spell of Buddhism. One legend mentions that King Milinda became an arhat, and that after his cremation his ashes were distributed between several Indian cities as relics like those of the Buddha. Here is an example of an astute European mind, at first repelled by Hinduism which cannot answer his psychological and moral queries; ("There is no ascetic or Brāhmaṇa who is capable of disputing with me and solving my doubts"), but is powerfully attracted by Buddhism that has, no doubt, certain universalist aspects. On the other hand, like Aśoka this Indo-Greek king left a name in the history of Buddhism. May it be that the great Greek monarch undertook his expedition against Pāṭaliputra, where Pushyamitra Śuṅga had treacherously captured Imperial authority and replaced Aśoka's dharma by Brahmanism in order to bring the whole of Northern India under the sway of Buddhism? "In all the land of India," we read in the *Questions*, "there was no such monarch as Milinda Rājā. He acquired great riches, and his army was powerful and well-trained". But the intervention of the Indianised Greek Rājā and his burning faith in the new creed which he had adopted and which was being eclipsed by the Śuṅga Brahmanical revival were not destined to bear fruit. For Milinda Rājā had to return immediately to Śākala in order to face a new danger either from an insurrection of the Indo-Greek princes of the Punjab or from Śaka or Parthian invasion. This is indicated by Strabo: "The fiercely

fighting Yavanas did not tarry long in the Middle Land; a terrible war had broken out in their own land". Like Menander many other Indo-Greeks were converted into Buddhism. The votive offerings in connection with Chaitya gr̥has of many Greek meridarchs are met with in different parts of North-western and Western India. Gifts are made by Ushavadāta (Rshabhadatta), a Śaka, who was converted to Brahmanism, for the maintenance of Hindu gods and Brāhmanas as well as for Buddhist Bhikkus. His wife had also an Indian name, Dakshamitrā or Saṅghamitrā. He got eight Brāhmaṇa maidens married away in Prabhāsa and on account of his beneficence to Hinduism he was given the title Trigośatasahasradā, the giver of three hundred thousand cows. Such was the spell of the Indian religions on the foreigners, who came as invaders and were, so to speak, socially Indianised.

The Indo-Greek Rapprochement

Outside the country, Indian sages and philosophers are mentioned with respect by Greek writers and received with honour in the Hellenic courts. The Indian Book of Fables, Pañchatantra, was probably written down in the second century B.C. in Kashmir, although the stories are much older, a few repeating the Jātaka ones. This largely determined the form and technique of the Fables of the Greek slave Aesop, mentioned by Herodotus. Gāndhāra, Kashmir and the Punjab were in this period the focus of Indo-Greek rapprochement. From Śākala, Taxila, Pushakalāvati and other centres there was constant voyage to Alexandria, as mentioned in the *Questions of Milinda*, and also by the land route through Balkh and the city of Palmyra to Antioch and the forts of Asia Minor and the Red Sea. The Greek orator Dio Chrisostom (100 A.D.) refers to Indian, Bactrian and Scythian residents in Alexandria, and also observes that the Iliad was sung in India where it was translated into an Indian language. Clement of Alexandria knows about the Buddha and Buddhism. He mentions: "There are some Indians who follow the precepts of the Buddha, whom by an exaggerated reverence they have exalted into a god". They have a "kind of pyramid (stūpa) beneath which they believe the bones of some divinity lie buried." Manichæism, preached in the middle of the third century A.D., was considerably influenced by the teaching of the Buddha, who is spoken of as a messenger of God. Mani, its

founder is spoken of as the Tathāgata; while certain Manichæan scriptures have the form of the Buddhist sutta and Pātimokkha. Terebunthus, one of the Manichæan wise men called himself a new Boddas (Buddha). Later on Plotinus (205-270 A.D.), Bardesanes and Basilides, all seem to have visited the East for the study of religion and philosophy. Clement was the first Greek philosopher to mention the Buddha although Buddhist missionaries under the designations of the Therapeutæ (Theraputæ) of Alexandria and the Essenes of Palestine, were familiar figures in the Eastern Mediterranean. It is to these Buddhist monks that Christianity owes certain fundamental conceptions and legends. Several Christian historians refer to the indebtedness of Christianity of the orthodox forms to the observance of celibacy, relic worship and other rituals and austerities in Buddhism. Indian figures found at Memphis in Egypt indicate that under the Ptolemies Buddhism and Buddhist festivals were well-known; while an inscription from the Thebaid is mentioned as being dedicated by Sophon the Indian. Rawlinson observes: "It would be interesting to deal with the influence of India through Alexandria upon the early Christian Church. Monasticism and relic-worship may have been borrowed from Buddhism. Then we may ask whether Christ Himself owed any of His teaching to the Essenes, and they to the Buddhists of Balkh and Persia? Eastern thought influenced Neo-Platonism and Gnosticism, and possibly Origen. Saint Josaphat, Prince of India, as Gautama the Buddha was known, who is still regarded as a saint by the Roman Church, reached Europe from Antioch. The presence of Indian fables in the *Gesta Romanorum*, Boccaccio, and in Chaucer is also a remarkable fact." There is also a close resemblance between Buddhist and Christian legends of the miraculous conception, the rise of the Star at birth, the prophecy of the sages and the temptation. The Lalitavistara and the Bible stories of the lives of Gautama and Jesus respectively are indeed strikingly similar. The Jātaka also gives the story of the pious disciple of the Buddha walking on the water, and the Lotus of the True law gives the legend of the prodigal son. Like the Lalitavistara and Jātaka legends, ancient folk stories of India, as embodied in the Pañchatantra and the Hitopadeśa, also migrated to the Mediterranean, where the well-known Aesop, who lived at the court of Croesus of Lydia, translated them into

Greek, and another Greek version attributed to Babrius appeared in the third century A.D. In the same century Ammonius Saccas, Plotinus and Porphyry (232-304 A.D.), famous philosophers of Alexandria, were deeply influenced by Indian philosophical speculation, especially Sāṅkhya and Buddhist. This was largely due to the presence of monks from India and also of Indian ambassadors who were received at the Court of Emperor Antoninus Pius.

There was a brisk exchange of merchants and scholars between Egypt and the Indo-Greek kingdoms. In the most famous city of the Indo-Greeks, Śākala, Greek traders and philosophers were as much welcome as sages or "leading men of each of the different sects" of India. We read in the *Questions of Milinda*, "Shops are there for the sale of Benares muslin, Kotumbara stuffs, and of other cloths of various kinds, and sweet odours are exhaled from the bazaars, where all sorts of flowers and perfumes are tastefully set out. Jewels are there in plenty, such as men's hearts desire and guilds of traders in all sorts of finery display their goods in the bazaars that face all quarters of the sky. So fully is the city of money, and of gold and silverware, of copper and stoneware, that it is a very mine of dazzling treasures. And there is laid up there much store of property and corn and things of value in warehouses—foods and drinks of every sort, syrups and sweet-meats of every kind. In wealth it rivals Uttarakuru and in glory it is as Alasanda (Alexandria), the city of the gods".

The Śuṅga period saw a national renaissance comparable with the Gupta Brahmanical revival. This was focussed round the three principal Śuṅga cities: Vidiśā, the seat of the Śuṅga viceroy, whence Vasumitra, the grandson and general of Pushyamitra, marched off to defeat the Yavanas on the banks of the river Sindhu that formed the barrier between the empire of Pushyamitra and the Yavana kingdom of Western Malwa; Gonarda, lying between Vidiśā and Ujjain, the birth-place of the famous literary figure of the age, Patañjali (also called Gonarddiya); and Bharhut where was built the famous Buddhist stūpa, an impressive testimony of the religious catholicism of the Śuṅga emperors. This revival was largely the outcome of the spread of the Bhāgavata and Māheśvara cults and the cross-fertilisation of the ancient Brahmanical and Greek cultures. Indian merchants, pilgrims and scholars came from Madhyadeśa

not only to Malwa, Punjab, Kashmir and Gandhāra, but also visited Syria and Egypt. The cities of the Punjab, the lower Indus Valley, Sauvira, Kashmir and Gandhāra became the foci of Indo-Greek culture. The later centuries—the Kushan period—saw a more considerable expansion of trade and cultural intercourse between Rome and Northern India. The cosmopolitan character and catholic religious temper of the Kushan age, that saw the revival of the Eastern and Western commerce and cultural intercourse across the trans-Asian routes astride the Kushan Empire, are strikingly illustrated by the figuration of a large variety of Middle Eastern, Greek, Roman, Zoroastrian and Hindu deities in the gold and silver coins of the Great and Little Kushans. The Kushans ruled a large part of north-western India, and after their conversion to Buddhism were thoroughly Hinduised. Thus their deities came from Babylonian, Messene, Iran and India. The pantheon of the Kushan coinage includes the following deities:—Babylonian: Nana or Nanai Indian Nayanā, (the principal goddess of Uruk), and Hero (Hera, the principal goddess of Syria), Greek and Roman: Zeus, Manaobago (Minerva), Arooaspo (Ares), Erakil (Heracles or Hercules), Helios, Selene, Hephaistos, and Riom (Roma); Iranian deities: Mozdooano (Mazda), Mithro (Mithras or Mithra), Miiro (Mihira or sun-god), Mao (Maha or moongod), Athsho (Atash), Pharro (Farr), Oanindo (Indra) and Ardoksho (Ardibahisht or Ashavahishta) and Hindu deities: Śiva (Maheśvara and Nandi), Oesha (Īsa), Ommo (Umā), Oanindo (Indra), Orlagno (Vṛtraghna), Mitra, Uron (Varuṇa), Oodo (Vāta), Ckando Komato Bizago (Skandha Kumāra Visakha), Maaceno (Mahasena or Kartikeya), Ganeśa (mentioned only by name), Buddo (Buddha), Advaitavādi Sākyamuni and Sarapo (Sarabha). Many were the theistic cults of Hinduism that more than its monism (advaita-vāda) appealed to the less civilised foreigners: the worship of Vāsudeva-Krishṇa and Arjuna, Śiva, Skanda and Viśākha (mentioned by Pāṇini and Patañjali) and Mihira or Āditya (worshipped at Multan and Kashmir) before they came under the spell of Mahāyāna Buddhism with its great patriarchs Parsva, Vasumitra, Aśvaghosa and Nāgārjuna who adorned the court of Kanishka, and contributed to bring about a religious and literary renaissance. While in the North the Great Kushans initiated the Mahāyāna Buddhist missionary

enterprise along the great caravan routes in the Tarim basin to Middle Asia and China, the brisk traffic between India and the Roman Empire, led to the drain of the precious metals that Pliny deplored. In the South the Western discovery of the monsoon by Hippalus (about 48 A.D.) resulted in a similar extension of commerce from the ports of Malabar and Coromandel coasts with Egypt, Syria and Rome. Rome supplied gold, silver, wines, and choice Yavana girls and body guards for the Indian princes, while India exported silks, fine clothes, spices and other luxuries. The merchants, travellers and perhaps also philosophers from Egypt and from the Roman colonies in Asia Minor were familiar figures in such towns of India as Purushapura, Takshaśilā, Mathurā, Ujjain, Broach and Mangalore, just as the Indians, Scythians and Bactrians were to be found in Berenice, Antioch and Alexandria. Greece greatly influenced Indian coinage, the development of astronomy (*horā-sāstra*) and other positive sciences and above all, the art of Gandhāra, Mathurā and Vidiśā for many decades.

The Romano-Buddhist Art of Gandhara

The Gandhāran art is hybrid, Romano-Buddhist. Art historians now distinguish between two schools. The first is relatively static and insipid, and is marked by the Greco-Roman emphasis of anthropomorphism and individualism rather than by the Indian spirituality and idealism, and the assimilation of symbols and motifs from the contemporary art of the Roman Orient. The second school under the influence of Mahāyāna idealism breathes a purely Buddhist-Indian spirit although the technique is Hellenic. The Buddha and the Bodhisattva masterpieces of the second school of Gandhāra exhibit a profound Indian piety that subdues Hellenism. Gandhāran art reached a Gothic phase in the Kabul valley, as has been ably shown by Grousset. He points out that Mahāyāna mysticism had the same effect on the formal conventions of Greco-Roman art in the production of Gothic, as Latin Christianity had in the West, but a thousand years earlier—"undoubtedly by no means the less curious of the adventures of the human mind." The art of Gandhāra achieved its maturity by the end of the first century A.D. and continued to influence India through the schools of Mathurā, Vidiśā and Sārnāth up to the 5th century. Even at

Amarāvati in the Deccan we find the Buddhas of the Gāndhāra school that Grousset characterises as Romano-Buddhist rather than Greco-Buddhist. The influence of the art school of North-west India and the Kabul valley, characterised by a fusion of Hellenism and Hinduism in the cosmopolitan Kushān world, penetrated to every nook and corner of India in the course of five centuries. Just at the time when Indo-Hellenic art was showing a remarkable vigour as well as the acuteness, spirituality and depth of the Gothic sculpture of Rheims, Amiens and Chartres, it was, however, overwhelmed by Mihiragula's conquest and devastation, and a whole chapter was brought to a sudden end—one of the great tragedies in the world history of art.

Many art motifs from distant Gandhāra penetrated to different parts of India including the extreme south representing however, the earlier insipid school and stereotyping the use of the Roman ideal and technique in the imaging of the Buddha—the combination of the Indian sage with the Greek Apollo. Thus Roman art largely determined the type and form of Śākya-muni, although the distinctive Indian auspicious marks on the Buddha's person and his gestures were meticulously presented. Kuvera, the god of wealth, was another familiar figure, half Roman, half Indian, resembling the Roman Zeus with Pallas Athens by his side. Yet in many of these sculptures, though sometimes executed by Greek artists, the old art traditions of the Maurya period are clearly discernible.

The period immediately following showed even a more expanded intercourse of India with the Greco-Roman world and a profounder impress of Hellas on Indian art. The former was due to the Greco-Roman navigators beginning systematically to make use of the south-western monsoon for reaching Bharuḡachcha, Sopārā, Kalyan, Lyndis, Muziris and other Arabian sea-ports since the first century A.D.; and the latter was due to the establishment in the middle of the first century A.D. of the Kushan empire, extending in its heyday from Gāndhāra to Kāśī that bestowed on Buddhism the same patronage as Aśoka did in the previous age. A remarkable testimony to the cultural intercourse between the West and Northern and Southern India at the beginning of the Christian era is afforded by the establishment of the first Christian Church in Malabar in 52 A.D.

according to the apocryphal work, the Acts of Thomas of the third century A.D. The Apostle Thomas was sent out as a slave to Abbanes, the representative of Gondophernes of the East. Now Gondophernes (Persian, Vindapharna, i.e., winner of glory,) is an Indo-Pārthian or Śaka Prince of Taxila, to whose court St. Thomas came to preach Christianity, probably by the sea-route from Alexandria to Barbaricum (Sanskrit Bandar) and then along the river Indus. But due to the Kushān invasion and consequent unsettlement in Gāndhāra, St. Thomas had to leave, taking again the sea-route from Barbaricum to Muziris. There he founded the Syrian Christian Church. After two decades of missionary effort in Malabar, St. Thomas went to the Coromandel coast where he became a martyr in A. D. 72. His relics lie in the Cathedral at Mylapore, Madras. The North under the Indo-Greeks and Kushāns, and the South under the Āndhras and Bhārāśivas for some centuries after the fall of the Mauryan empire in the second century B. C. were dominantly Buddhist and Brahmanical respectively, and followed distinct trends of culture, though the forces of world commerce and culture as well as successive drifts of foreigners streaming through the land and sea-routes were fashioning a new liberalism and humanism in both. From the north and north-west, the great Buddhist missionary movement through Gāndhāra, Kashmir and the Tārim basin was just commencing. In the South, Bhāgavatism was establishing itself side by side with the ancient orthodox Brahmanical faith, though Buddhism still survived in important centres. The Romano-Indian commerce was planting islands of Western faith and culture (along with the worship of the Emperor in the temple of Augustus in Muziris in the second third century A. D.) in the great ports of the Arabian Sea and the Coromandel Coast. Conversely, it was perhaps from the Deccan ports that the institutions of Buddhist monachism and relic worship, Neo-platonic ideas and Indian fables along with some beliefs of animism, tree and serpent cult spread like spices, pepper and other merchandise to Alexandria and Rome.

CHAPTER XI

THE TRANSFORMATION OF THE CHATURVARNA:

SOCIAL ABSORPTION OF FOREIGNERS

The Brahmanical Renaissance under the Andhras

The Brāhmaṇical revival first initiated by the Bhāraśiva-Nāga royal Brāhmaṇ house of Pushyamitra at Pāṭaliputra gradually spread and was deliberately nurtured by Sātavāhana and Pallava kings of South India and the Bhāraśiva-Nāga kings of Central India. The entire continent reacting against Buddhism, Jainism and other heresies and against Mauryan culture turned Brāhmaṇical. Yet the Brāhmaṇical revival was accompanied by a complete overhauling of the ancient Cāturvarṇa scheme and acceptance of the Yavana-Pārasikas, Śakas, Ābhīras and other foreigners as Kshatriyas and mixed varṇas. The Sātavāhanas led the Brahmanical renaissance although they were engulfed at sometimes by a wave of Śaka invasion from the Indus valley. The founder of the Sātavāhana house, Simuka, celebrated his accession to power by undertaking a horse-sacrifice. Brāhmaṇ king fought against Brāhmaṇ king and the rule of the Brāhmaṇ Śuṅgas and Kanvas at Pāṭaliputra was ended by the Sātavāhanas, whose empire extended from Malwa in the west to the banks of the Krishna and Godavari in the east. Pratiśṭhāna, Vaijayantī and Amarāvati became the new centres of the Brāhmaṇical renaissance. Brāhmaṇ ministers came into power recalling Vaśiṣṭha and Viśvāmitra. Brāhmaṇa generals led armies to the battlefields recalling Droṇa, and the Aśvamedha and Vājapeya rites were celebrated with great eclat by victorious kings, such as Simuka of the Sātavāhana house and Śivakandavarman Pallava, recalling Sudāsa and Yudhiṣṭhira. Simuka is said to have celebrated about twenty sacrifices including two Aśvamedha and several other sacrifices, such as Agnyādheya, Rājasūya, Aptoryāma and Gāvamayāna. Vast sums were spent; and in one sacrifice 24,000 kārshapaṇas and 11,000 cows were given away. This is a restoration with vengeance of Vedic

sacrifices now invested with rich political and moral significance as waves after waves of foreigners threatened freedom and culture in India. The Brāhmaṇical revival was also associated with a renewed interest in the Vedic deities viz., Indra, Mitra, Agni and Viṣṇu. Other deities whose names we come across in the Nānāghāt cave inscription of the first century B.C. include Vāśudeva, Saṅkarshaṇa, Indra and Dharma as well as Sun and Moon and Guardians of the Four Quarters (Lokapālas), viz. Yama Varuṇa, Kubera and Vasava.

Social Recognition of Foreigners and Artisan Groups

Brāhmaṇical orthodoxy was directed against the disintegration of the system of Varṇa that had been going on as the result of the cumulative operation of a variety of factors. Among these are miscegenation due to the foreigners intermarrying with the people on a mass scale, degradation of the higher varṇas to the social status of the Śūdras due to their adoption of improper, dishonourable or menial occupations, the development and complexity of economic life making adherence to the vocations assigned to each varṇa difficult, the movement among the laity, including the Śūdras, both men and women, to embrace the ascetic life as Ājivakas, Jains and Buddhists, and the general neglect of Vedic rites and ceremonies. The Yavanas or the Asiatic Hellenes were considered as the most esteemed among the foreigners, and regarded as derived from inter-marriage between the Kshatriya males and Śūdra females. Gautama refers to the unanimity among the Smṛti authorities on this question. Centuries of Buddhism led to the gradual diminution of the importance of the priestly class and the Kshatriyas as well as the wealthy Vaisyas came to acquire greater esteem than the Brāhmaṇs. In both the Buddhist literature and the epics we find the position of the upper castes reversed. This trend of a new social stratification and virtual subordination of the priestly to military power, so strongly evident in the epics, was due to the indiscriminate adoption by the Brāhmaṇas of all types of occupations. Many Brāhmaṇas and Kshatriyas by discarding the Vedas and the elaborate Vedic sacrifices, by marrying Śūdra women or by adopting servile or low occupations sank to Śūdrahood. Such occupations as those of the Rathakāra (wheel-wright), Karmakāra (smith), Taksan

or Tastri (carpenter), Charmannā (tanner) and Vayitri (weaver) were dignified in the Vedic period. Some of these like the Rathakāras were placed as special classes along with the Brāhmaṇs, Rājanyas and Vaisyas, as pointed out by Keith and Macdonell and by Fick, but became degraded because of the notion that manual labour was not dignified. The Rathakāras, we have already seen, were classed with the Chaṇḍālas, Nishādas, Venas and Pukkusas as hīna-jāti in the Jātakas and the Vinaya Pitaka. Thus the processes of decline of social status and prestige are pretty ancient. In the Mahābhārata (Śāntiparva, Chapter 184) we read about the degradation of certain Brāhmaṇs to the Śūdra status due to their loss of character and adoption of dishonourable professions. There is in the Atri-Saṁhitā a specific statement that the Brāhmaṇ becomes a Kshatriya who fights, a Vaisya who engages in agriculture, animal-keeping and trade, and a Śūdra if he sells shellac, salt, saffron, milk, clarified butter, honey and meat. Six categories of Brāhmaṇs are named in a descending order according to the ways of livelihood down to the Nishādha, Paśu, Mlechchha and Chāṇḍāla Brāhmaṇs (373-383). Economic distress or servitude of the Brāhmaṇs and Kshatriyas endangered the Brāhmaṇic scheme of life in the Maurya age when perhaps as many Brahmins amassed considerable wealth (mahāsāla Brahmins) as they were impoverished, adopting the occupation of bhatakas (hired farm-hands), cowherds, goatherds, acrobats, dancers, beggars and thieves (Jātakas, Mahābhārata, anuśāsana-parva, 33, 11 ff). The contrasts of luxury and poverty of the Brāhmaṇs, first discernible in the Maurya period, the acceptance of Buddhism and Jainism and the life of the ascetic by increasing numbers of Śūdras and even Chaṇḍālas, and the general vogue of marriages of higher with lower castes, especially among the Kshatriya groups, led to a widespread lapse of varṇāśrama dharma and āchāra. Even Kautilya permits the inter-marriage between the upper three varṇas and Śūdras. The Dharmasāstras permitted marriages between the male of a prior varṇa and the female of the succeeding varṇa (anuloma) but disallowed marriages between the male of the lower varṇa and the female of the next higher varṇa (pratiloma). To these were added the new factor of the Mlechchhas or foreigners, coming in large numbers to India, accepting Śaivism, Bhāgavatism and Buddhism, and

claiming and obtaining as rulers and chiefs the status of Kshatriyas. The rise and propagation of the cults of Kārtikeya and Mihira or Āditya also seem to be associated with foreign interest and adherence. In the Buddhist and Jaina texts we find that the Kshatriyas were the first varṇa. In one of the Jātakas we read: "Even with regard to a Brāhmaṇa the Kshatriya feels superiority so much that King Arindama calls Somaka, the son of Purohita (priest), a man of low birth (hīnajacca, v. 257)." It is thus no wonder that the early foreign immigrants of India aspired after the status of the Kshatriya or the ruling class. In the Purāṇas is mentioned a warrior Viśvasphani of Magadha "who overthrowing all kings will make other castes as kings, viz., Kaivartas, Pancakas, Pulindas and Brāhmaṇs. He will establish those persons as kings in various countries overthrowing the Kshatriya caste he will create *another Kshatriya caste*." Social assimilation was promoted by the alacrity with which the foreigners adopted Buddhism and Vaishṇavism and Indian family names, Yavanas converted to Buddhist laity assumed such names as Simhādharma (Simhādhairya), Dharma, Chit (Chitra), Chāmda (Chandra) and Indragnidatta, and like the Buddhists performed the usual Vedic rites from garbhādhāna to funeral. The contemporary Brāhmanical opinion was to assign the Yavanas, the Śakas, the Ābhiras and in fact all foreigners who came to India as fighting men to the Kshatriya varṇa and name-endings like datta and varman were adopted by the foreigners to indicate their filiation with the Kshatriyas. Gautama (600 B.C. to 400 B.C.) basing his opinion on the past, observes that the Yavanas (Greeks) were the offspring of a Kshatriya male and a Śūdra female, comprising a mixed varṇa. Baudhāyana (600-400 B.C.) also notes that the countries of Avantī, Anga, Magadha, Saurashtra and Dakṣiṇāpatha are forbidden lands (niṣiddha deśa) being the homes of the "mixed" castes (I 1,29). But Manu regards the Śakas and Yavanas as originally Kshatriyas but reduced to the status of Śūdras, and enjoins that the Mlechchha and Śūdra-rājyas should be avoided. Vyāsa includes in the list of forbidden lands Anga, Vanga, Āndhra country and generally the regions inhabited by the Mlechchhas. On the other hand, Yājñavalkya, who flourished, according to Jayaswal, in a kingdom somewhere in Madhya-deśa not later than the second century A.D. did not show a particular repugnance to the

Kushāns that were dominating Northern India in this period, and as converts to Buddhism challenging the Brāhmaṇical social order by creating new castes, and even by replacing Hindu by Buddhist temples.

Racial Admixture in Relation to Varna Rules

The kings of the Brāhmaṇical revival yet tried their best to rehabilitate the varṇa structure, although they themselves were not reluctant to marry Yavanīs. In the Sātavāhana family itself Gautamīputra's son married the daughter of the Śaka Rudradāmana. Foreign influx led to the varṇas getting considerably intermixed as recorded in a Sātavāhana family inscription of the second century A.D. During the same period we find King Sātavāhana Pulumayī of foreign extraction being extolled for his success in preventing the admixture of the four varṇas. New castes were, however, continuously formed as the result of the assimilation of the Aryan groups with the invading tribes, many of whom embraced Bhāgavatism or Vaiṣṇavism since the second century B.C. Such new castes, products of admixture (varṇa-saṁkara), included the Mlechchhas and the Ājivas (artisan groups), according to the Vāyu Purāṇa (not later than 500 A.D.) as well as the Vrātyas and Vṛshalas of Manu's classification. The foreigners or Mlechchhas are often characterised in the Epic as well as in the Purāṇas as 'casteless'—the feature which struck the Brāhmaṇic philosopher the most. For Aryan society was built upon the basis of the metaphysical conception of the four functional varṇa groups, grounded in culture and āchāra. There is a clear distinction between varṇa and jāti in Yājñavalkya Smṛti (II, 69 and 206). Yet when the assimilation of various strains of foreigners and semi-Hinduised artisan and aboriginal groups became imperative the earliest Dharmaśūtras such as the Gautama (6th or 5th century B.C.) developed the theory of mixed varṇas (varṇa-saṁkara) in order to explain the origin of, and give recognition to, new ethnic groups other than the four recognised varṇas. The theory of mixed varṇa (varṇa-saṁkara), though in some respects unreal and artificial, has been, indeed, of tremendous historical importance in the gradual absorption of foreign groups into the social order. The Brāhmaṇical predilection for abstraction, systematisation and discovery of symmetry in every sphere of existence, including the social life, which was put to a

severe test by foreign immigration on a large scale, is in fact reflected in the hypothesis of inter-breeding—a view which could enable the Brāhmaṇa legists to open the gates of society to all foreign and diverse elements of the population.

The Smṛti Fiction of Varna-Samkara

The theory of inter-breeding (samkara) as the basis of formation of new castes within the ambit of Aryan society was first developed in Gautama (6th or 5th century B.C.) and Āpastamba (5th or 4th century B.C.) Āpastamba mentions only the following as mixed castes: Chāṇḍāla, Pukkasa and Vaina. But this list was enlarged gradually by Baudhāyana and Manu. Rathakāra, Svapaka, Vaina and Kukkuṭa were among those added by Baudhāyana. The fiction of varṇa admixture was, in fact, most elaborated in Manu Smṛti, which gives the biggest list of the mixed castes, associates them for the first time with specific callings and also stresses the importance of āchāra and ritual purity. All this made the entry of the foreigners and Indian artisan groups (ājivas), that were in the fringes of the Brāhmaṇic social order, much easier. Simultaneously the notion of varṇa based on culture and character was superseded by the notion of jāti based on occupation, race and heredity, and varṇa and jāti coalesced as a defence mechanism against the fresh intermingling of the higher varṇas. Yājñavalkya (between the 2nd century B.C. and second century A.D.) observes: "Children born of a union between members of the same varṇa are called sa-jātis i.e., of the same jāti, sons' born of marriages not permitted only contribute to perpetuate the lineage". Gradually the word varṇa or jāti became interchangeable in the sense of mixed caste as in Manu (X, 27, 31). "The Śūdra is the fourth varṇa ; there is no fifth varṇa " says Manu. To give foreigners or low indigenous groups the status of Śūdras is to be interpreted as giving them social recognition. According to Baudhāyana, those who are born of varṇasamkara are called Vrātyas. The fluidity of social relations and the vogue of Varṇasamkara in actual society will be evident from the remarks of Yudhisṭhira in the Mahābhārata (Vanaparva, 180, 31-33): "It appears to me that it is very difficult to ascertain the jāti of human beings on account of the confusion of all varṇas; all sorts of men are always begetting offspring from all sorts of

women". Miscegenation was a grave social menace in the early centuries of the Christian era. Yudhiṣṭhira regards character as the principal basis of the determination of varṇa and the epic gives the following shining examples of non-Brahmans rising to the status and honour of Brahman: Ariṣṭasena, Sindhudvīpa, Devāpi and Viśvāmitra (XIII, 143, IX, 39). With reference to jāti (caste) and kula (lineage), the epic observes: "Truthfulness, restraint, tapas, charity, non-violence and conformity to dharma, these led men towards their goal and not caste nor family". (Vanaparva, 181, 42-43). But most Smṛti writers judged varṇa from occupation (vṛtti) and birth (jāti) and at the same time stressed that status could be appreciated or depreciated by character and conduct and decried the mixture or intermingling of varṇas. In Manu the Vrātyas and Vṛshalas are usually regarded as approximating to the Greeks or Yavanas (derived from Greek Ionian) and the various immigrant Mlechchha tribes that could be assimilated into Hinduism after the observance of the Vrātyastoma ritual. Manu specifically mentions the Yavanas (Greeks), Kambojas, Śakas (Scythians), Pāradas, and Pahlavas (Parthians) among Kshatriya clans who are "degraded" (Vrātyas) for disregarding both Brahman and established ceremonials and have sunk in this world to the condition of Śūdras. The Āśvalāyana Sutta describes the Yonas (Yavanas) and Kambojas as peoples adhering to a different social scheme that "admits of nothing but a general distinction between the master (ārya) and slave (dāsa) with no insurmountable barrier between the two groups and making it possible for men to pass from one class to another according to opportunities and vicissitudes of life".

The Mahābhārata places the Yavanas, Kambojas and Gandhāras in the north-west frontier, Gandhāra; while Buddhaghosa's Papañcasūdanī mentions them as belonging to the Pārasika-varṇa. The Purāṇas mention the following peoples living in the western and north-western parts of India: the Yavanas, the Śakas, Pāradas, Tushāras, Kambojas and Pahlavas; and in the Mahābhārata the first two actually participate in the Battle under the Kamboja king Sudakṣiṇa. According to the Śukranīti the Yavanas had all the four castes mixed together, disregarded the authority of the Vedas and lived in the north and west. D. R. Bhandarkar is of the view that in early times Yavana always denoted the Greek nationality, but from the

second century A.D. it may have meant the Persians. Not only was the entire region comprising the Indus Valley, Kashmir, Gandhāra and parts of Western India the focus of Yavana-Pārsika or Perso-Hellenistic culture, with its filiations to the Mediterranean region, but there was also foreign cultural infiltration even in the Madhyadeśa due to both the considerable volume of immigration and the eagerness with which the foreigners, the "dreaded barbarians" (dāruṇa Mlechchhdayah) of the Mahābhārata, were accepting Indian habits and creeds.

The Relaxation of Caste

The greatest of the Śātavāhana monarchs, Gautamiputra Śātakarṇi, called himself the destroyer of the Yavanas, Śakas and Pahlavas, and as he sought to restore the four-fold Hindu-social gradation (chāturvarṇa), protected the Brāhmaṇas (dvijas) and avaras (the lower functional groups) and repressed the fallen or degraded Kshatriya groups. Yet Hindu society gradually accepted the principle, stressed in the Brahmanical Smṛtis, that in the marriage of a higher with a lower caste, the caste of the father is significant and determines the son's status. The Buddha in one of the Jātakas observes: "The old wise men acted according to the principle: the family of the mother does not matter; the family of the father alone is important". There is, no doubt, that the wide vogue of heterodoxy as represented by the creed of the Ājīvakas, Jainism and Buddhism, the adoption of the homeless life by the intellectual classes and the great racial admixture especially among Kshatriya clans completely changed varṇa ideals and regulations. If Jainism retained in large measure the Indian scheme of classes and castes and showed grater adaptation to Brāhmanism, than Buddhism, the religion of the Buddha grounded itself in a new conception of the dignity of man. When the chāturvarṇa system was being glorified and revised as a natural reaction against the influx of the "mingled barbarous hordes of Yavanas and Śakas" to which the Rāmāyaṇa gives witness, both the Vāśiṣṭha Smṛti, that was most harsh and invidious in its assertions of Brahmanical superiority and Śūdra inferiority, and the liberal Divyāvadāna were composed (probably first century A. D.). In the latter well-known Hīnayāna text, King Prasenañjit comes to the Buddha along with many Brāhmaṇas, Kshatriyas and citizens of Śrāvastī to complain

against the Buddha's procedure of ordaining a Caṇḍāla girl as a nun. The Buddha pacifies them by his logic and liberal social outlook, and the king and people are convinced how frail the claims of the Brāhmaṇa caste are. It is pointed out that "such differences as exist among the different kinds of animals and plants, cannot be shown among the castes. Moreover, according to the theory of the transmigration of souls and of Karma, there cannot be any castes, as everyone is reborn according to his actions".

The egalitarian gospel of Buddhism completely and permanently changed the spirit of caste. But the rise of the foreign Greek and Buddhist Kushān power for at least two centuries in Northern India after the fall of the Maurya Empire indirectly contributed towards a revival of orthodoxy under the Āndhras and the Bhāraśiva-Nāga kings in Central India. Brāhmaṇism and the Varṇāśrama scheme of society, indeed, found a refuge, first in the Sātavāhana dynasty and then, in the Nāga-Bhāraśiva dynasty, which claimed Kshatriya descent, extended their power up to the Ganges valley and performed Aśvamedha sacrifices. The Bhāraśiva power merged into the rising power of the Brāhmaṇa Vākātakas, who were a dominant power till the rise of the Guptas and who were also defenders, for one century, of Brāhmaṇical faith, sacrifices and varṇāśrama dharma and āchāra. No wonder that the Purāṇas speak of the greatness of the Vindhya-Śakti Vākātakas on whom fell the task of defending the Brāhmaṇical culture against the habits and manners of the foreign-born Buddhists who were dominating Northern India until the rise of the Guptas.

The Popular Cult of Bhāgavatism

Hinduism also reacted to the new social climate through the diffusion of the Sāṅkhya, Yoga and systems of Āgama of various schools of Asceticism as well as the Vaishṇava and Śiva-Bhāgavata cults that did not stand on Vedic foundations exclusively and that all opened altogether new avenues to the lower orders for the acquisition of the essential values of Brāhmaṇism. In the 4th century B.C. we find a mention of the worship of Vāsudeva and Arjuna in Pāṇini, and of Vāsudeva and Baladeva in the Buddhist work Niddesa. Mathurā was the most important centre of the Vāsudeva-Krishna cult (with its two important cities,

Mathurā and Krishṇapura); and Megasthenes (320 B.C.) noticed that the Śūrasenas of the Yamunā valley worshipped Herakles, undoubtedly Hari or Krishṇa. The Bhāgavata dharma and Vāsudeva-cult spread from the Yamuna valley to Central India, Rajputana and Mahārāshṭra, and by the second century B.C. it was a popular cult throughout India, attracting foreigners. In Vidiśā the worship of Saṁkarshaṇa, Vāsudeva and Pradyumna, associated with the Pāñcharātra doctrine, is indicated by inscriptions of the 2nd—1st century B.C. The celebrated inscription of Vidiśā, about 180 B.C. of the Greek convert Heliodorus mentions Vāsudeva as the God of Gods (devadeva) in whose honour the foreigner erected a flag staff with the image of Garuḍa on the top. The Nanāghāt cave inscription of the first century B.C. invokes both Saṁkarshaṇa and Vāsudeva among other deities; while the Ghosundi and Hathibada inscriptions mention Pārāsaripuṭra Sarvatāta as having constructed a stone enclosure for the place of worship called Nārāyaṇa vāṭa for Bhagavat Saṁkarshaṇa and Vāsudeva. The Tusam inscription of the 4th or 5th century A.D. mentions Yasastrāta as a devotee of Bhagavat belonging to the Brāhmaṇ Gotama gotra who inherited the Yoga practice of the Arya Sātvatas through many generations. This yoga practice refers, according to the Sātvata Saṁhitā, to the contemplation of Vāsudeva, the Supreme Brāhmaṇ according to his quadruple nature (vyūha), as represented by Vāsudeva, Saṁkarshaṇa, Pradyumna and Aniruddha. This is the ancient Vyūha doctrine which we come across in the Nārāyaṇīya section of the Mahābhārata. According to the tradition supported by the Pāñcarātra scriptures each Vyūha represents a manifestation of the Supreme Being emerging in successive order corresponding to the order of cosmic causation. The order is as follows: (1) Saṁkarshaṇa who presides over Ahankāra, (2) Vāsudeva who presides over Citta; (3) Pradyumna who presides over Buddhi; (4) Aniruddha who presides over Manas. For well-nigh seven or eight centuries Bhāgavatism took the form of worship not merely of Vāsudeva, the first of the four Vyūhas, but also of the three other Vyūhas. As a matter of fact in one of the Sātvata Tantras we have not only the four original Vyūhas, but also five additional ones, making a total of nine Vyūhas—Nārāyaṇa, Nṛsiṁha, Hayagrīva, the Mahāvarāha and Brahmā. Thus the practice of the Yogic contemplation of Vāsudeva, according to

his four-fold nature, at the end of the last millennium, as evident in the Vidiśā inscriptions, is corroborated by the Gupta inscription. It appears that the foreigners were attracted to the worship of Reality according to the metaphysical quadruple arrangement or division. The Bhāgavata Purāna mentions specifically the foreigners who became converts to Bhāgavatism: Kirāta, Hūṇa, Andhra, Pulinda, Pukkasa, Ābhira, Suhma, Yavana and Khasa. According to a Syrian legend, the cult was prevalent in Syria as early as the second century B. C. reaching there by the familiar land-route of trade. The bid of Krishṇa-Bhāgavatism to become an orthodox Indian religion is clearly indicated in the second century B. C., by the assimilation of Vāsudeva-Krishṇa into the earlier Vedic gods, Viṣṇu and Nārāyaṇa. In the Mathurā museum there is a stone slab beonging to the Kushān period which shows Vasudeva crossing the Yamunā with the infant Krishṇa in his flight to Gokula in order to save his son from the wrath of Kamsa. Another sculpture represents Krishṇa-Govardhana-dhara with cowherds and kine. Both these are saturated less with the Parkham vigour and massiveness and more with the inherently sensuous quality and rhythm of the folk plastic language as in the traditional Yaksha or Vṛkshakā figures. A pillar of Mandor, Jodhpur, belonging to the fifth century, also depicts the Krishṇa legends of the lifting of the Govardhana hill and the over-turning of the cart. It is of course in the Gupta period that Bhāgavatism establishes itself as the most popular, even imperial creed as recorded in so many noble sculptures and inscriptions.

The Origin of the Vasudeva-Krishna Image in Mathura Art

The earliest Vāsudeva-Krishṇa image are the standing four-armed figures of the Kushān period, found also at Mathurā. The sculpture of Mathurā fashioned both the standing Viṣṇu and Buddha figures on the pattern of the ancient Parkham and other Yaksha images, and thus satisfied the contemporary need of giving expression to the new Bhāgavatism in the folds of both Buddhism and Hinduism. Probably installed at Mathurā in the beginning at the instance of the Sourasenas or the Sātvata sect the Viṣṇu image soon became immensely popular due to the transformation in the religious outlook of the people by bhakti. Archæological evidence points to the priority of the Vāsudeva

image to the image of the Buddha, the former being installed in temples at the time of Śodāsa or Śomdasa, the Śaka satrap (mahākṣatrapa) of Mathurā and Taxila, (about A.D., 15) who founded a large Indo-Scythian Empire that probably extended from the Indus delta and Kathiawad to the Jamunā Valley. Brāhmanical as well as Buddhist art in the next few centuries centred round the making of images of deities and of temples connected with the various creeds. The efflorescence of Mathurā art in the Jamunā valley in the first and second centuries A.D. is at once the cause and consequence of the appearance of the Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa and Buddha images. It is a paradox that the Protestant revolt against ceremonial sacrifice and institutional religion led by the two master minds of India, Kṛṣṇa and Gautama, lost itself in the worship of images that they both condemned in unequivocal terms. The Buddha observes, "For truly they honour me who fulfil the higher and the lower Law". The admonition in the Vajra-cchedikā-sūtra is even more emphatic: "He who looks for me through any material form, or sees me through any audible sound, has entered on an erroneous course and shall never behold the Tathāgata". Similarly the Bhagavad-gītā clearly enjoins that the highest worship is that of the formless, unborn Absolute, and that the gods are but limited forms of this. The lesser Devas bring less rewards, while devotion to the Absolute brings the supreme reward (IX, 25, 26). But the feelings and affections of the people stirred by the upsurge of Bhāgavatism in both Buddhist and Brāhmanical worlds demanded images (pratimā); and the graceful sculpture of Mathurā abundantly fulfilled this demand. The Parkham, Baroda, Patna and Pawaya Yaksha represent the earlier generic type from which the patterns of the Bodhisattva and Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa images of Mathurā and elsewhere were derived. Even the standing poses and the folds on the garments of the Bodhisattva, Viṣṇu and of Indra (in the Bodh-gayā railing, 1st century B.C.) show a remarkable similarity with those of the Yakṣa statuary. The Mathurā art catered to the emotional needs of all contemporary creeds, and from the first to the sixth century moulded the motifs and canons of art in the different culture areas of India as well as abroad. The powerful indigenous traditions of iconography in early Indian sculpture got a stimulus, a definition and a setting from the contemporary sculpturing of the Kushān Emperor by the Mathurā

school, especially as the Indian literature drew no distinction between the Cakravartī in the secular and in the spiritual realm; and perhaps there was also infiltration of the Roman notion of the worship of the Emperor-deity through Gandhāra and the southern ports. The latter reflected itself in the Kushān coinage and influenced the more elegant Hindu and Buddhist cultures. Itself the product of a superb synthesis of popular Yaksha and contemporary cults of Bhāgavatism and Mahāyāna Buddhism as well as Græco-Buddhist influences, the Mathurā school embodies the genius and ideal of Indian art in its abstraction, simplicity and dynamic rhythm. It was, however, in the social climate of the early Gupta age with its broad humanism, racial admixture and national revival, focalised round the mythical exploit of Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa-Cakrapāṇi, that Kṛṣṇa Bhāgavatism evolved into the status of a national religion with the Imperial Guptas calling themselves Parama Bhāgavatas or worshippers of Bhāgavata or Vāsudeva. It is singular that a Gupta inscription belonging to the Parivrajaka Mahārāja actually opens with the sacred Vaiṣṇava mantram: "Om Namo Bhagavatē Vāsudevāya."

In the Kāvya of Kālidāsa we find not only Vāsudeva-Kṛṣṇa identified with Viṣṇu and Nārāyaṇa, but Kṛṣṇa is also called Gopāla-Kṛṣṇa. He has obtained the Kaustubha jewel from the serpent Kāliya of the Jamunā, "wears the peacock feathers resembling the cloud adorned with rainbow", and his wife is Rukmiṇī and his brother Balarāma. In a famous long prayer to Viṣṇu in the Raghuvamśa (X. 13-63), Viṣṇu is praised as the sole refuge of the seven worlds (Sapta-lokasya samśraya) and abides in the hearts of all. "To persons whose minds are surrendered to Him, whose actions are dedicated to Him and who have completely relinquished all worldly desires, He is the sole refuge for obtaining salvation". This is reminiscent of the bhakti-yoga of the Bhagavad-gītā. Kālidāsa gave superb expression to the swelling tide of bhakti in Kṛṣṇa-Bhāgavatism of his age. Kṛṣṇa-Bhāgavatism was the most popular religion in the Gupta and post-Gupta epoch and obtained converts from foreigners as well as from the Śūdras and women. Gradually it won the hearts of the Vedic Brāhmins and Kshatriyas. The Mahābhārata became the chief vehicle of the Bhāgavata-dharma and Vāsudeva cult. The epics and the entire Paurāṇic literature

called collectively *Jaya-śāstra* (auspicious literature) were recited by first saluting *Kṛṣṇa*, *Arjuna*, *Sarasvatī* and *Vyāsa* and promulgated *Bhāgavatism* and *Bhakti*.

The Rise of *Siva-Bhāgavatism*

Siva-Bhāgavatism also spread during this epoch under the inspiration of sage *Lakuliśa*, who probably lived in the time of *Patañjali* and was a disciple of *Śiva-Śrīkāṇṭha*. The latter according to the *Mahābhārata* first preached the *Pāśupata* doctrines. *Patañjali* not only mentions the *Śiva-Bhāgavatas* but also refers to the stress they lay on the worship of images. Its popularity and diffusion in Northern India were signalled by the conversion of the *Kushān* conqueror of India, *Kadphises*, who in his imperial capital at *Taxila* depicted *Śiva* with his trident and bull in one of his coins. In this case, too, there was assimilation to the Vedic God, *Rudra-Śiva* (also called *Bhava*, *Īśāna*, *Śarva*). The term *Śiva* or the Good is intended to offset the frightening character of the Vedic deity, *Rudra*. In the later Vedic literature *Śiva* becomes the Great God *Mahādeva* and is identified with the *Vrātyas* or outcastes. In the *Śvetāśvatara Upanishad* great prominence is given to *Śiva*, the Absolute, who can be reached through ardent devotion. But the conception of *Śiva* is not built up only by the Vedic faith and tradition; for *Śiva* was also the Lord of the Animals (*Pāśupati*) of the Indus valley people. The animals that surround the *Mohenjodaro* deity are the tiger, elephant, deer, buffalo and rhinoceros. In the *Mahābhārata* all these animals are associated with *Śiva Pāśupati*. He wears the tiger's and the elephant's skin, and is also the destroyer of the buffalo and rhino (*Mahi-śagha Gāndālin*). The cults of *Rudra*, *Śiva*, *Pāśupati* and the *Līṅgam* (both in crude stone and *mukha līṅga* forms) gradually coalesced into a fully developed theistic *Śiva-Bhāgavatism* that spread in the Gupta age from Western India to Eastern Bengal. The Indo-Aryan recognition of *Śiva's* legitimate divine status is recorded in the sequel of *Dakṣa's* magnificent and pompous sacrifice to which *Śiva* was not invited due to his supposed low-origin, resulting in a catastrophe for both heaven and earth. In the dialogue between *Śiva* and *Dakṣa* recorded in the *Mahābhārata*, the former mentions that "in ancient times he formulated the *Pāśupata* system which was contradictory to, though

in a very few cases agreeing with, the regulations of the varṇāśramadharma and which was denounced by the universe". The Vāyu Purāṇa often mentions the sect, the Lakuliśa Pāsupatas, gives two quotations from the Svetāśvatara Upanishad which seems to have been the foundation scripture of the Pāsupatas, and also enumerates the following four sons or disciples of Śiva. Śveta, Śikhā, Śvetāśva and Śvetalōhita. Lakuliśa (holder of Lakula or club) or Nakulin must have come later than these spiritual teachers of Śaivism and refashioned the original Pāsupata yoga on the basis of the Svetāśvatara Upanishad whence is to be traced Brahmanical worship of Śiva or Īśāna (liṅga) presiding over the yoni. The Kūrma purāṇa (XVI) mentions the following Śaiva sects: Pāsupatas, Bhairavas, Vāmas, Nakulas and Kapālas with their own Śāstras. It was the mingling of the Aryan and Indo-Aryan elements that favoured Śiva-Bhāgavatism, particularly its Pāsupata form with its stress of both human loving worship and divine grace. Its authority was represented by the eighteen Āgamas (or folk traditions that came into existence in the Gupta period), which did not always follow the backing of revelation or the Śrutis, and hence were in some measure suspect.

Mysticism and the Social Egalitarian Trend

As a matter of fact in the centuries immediately preceding the beginning of the Christian era, all faiths in India assumed a bhakti character. Vāsudeva, Śiva, the Buddha as well as the four Guardians of the Quarters the Yakshas—all were styled Bhāgavatas. Pāṇini refers to bhakti directed towards Māhārājas the Four Great Kings of the Quarters. The same spirit of devotion is discernible even in the Majjhima Nikāya, which says: "He who has faith (śraddhā) in Me and love (prema) for Me will attain heaven", while we have the inscription at Bhārhut (2nd Century B.C.) Bhagavato Saka Munino Bodho, and on the Piprāhwā vase, Bhagavato Śākyamuni. The coming into prominence of Bhāgavatism focussed the protest against renunciation and asceticism, prominent in the heresies of Jainism and Buddhism, stressed the obligations to family and society and put spiritual exaltation, associated with the worship of a personal diety, above religious intellectualism and a dry, moral outlook. Both Kṛṣṇa and Śiva Bhāgavatism were accepted more by the

foreigners and low castes than by the high-born of India, and went against the varṇāśrama dharma in admitting everybody to worship and to yogic practice or sanyāsa. The early traditional attitude against Bhāgavatism is shown by the following observations of Atri: "Those Brāhmaṇs who are devoid of Vedic lore study the śāstras (Grammar, logic etc); those devoid of śāstraic lore study the Purāṇas and earn their livelihood by reciting these; those who are devoid of purāṇa reading became agriculturists; and those who are devoid even of that became Bhāgavatas. Initiation was thrown open to Śūdras and women whose status markedly improved as the Pāñcharātra Śaivas and Pāśupatas gained adherents largely from outside the pure Brāhmanical fold. The Jayākhyā-saṁhitā, regarded as one of the most authoritative scriptures of the Pāñcharātras, and dated about the middle of the 5th Century A.D., disregarded sacerdotalism and gifts to the Brāhmaṇs; the Pāñcharātra Saṁhitās were to be preferred to the Vedas for the knowledge of Vāsudeva, "the final truth", and the Yatis, Āptas, Ācāryas, Ekāntins and Vaikhānasas to the Brāhmaṇs. Similarly the Pāśupatas or Āgamic Śaivas went against the Varṇāśrama system and ignored the Vedas, ritualism and gifts to the Brāhmaṇs. In the Padmapurāṇa we find the creed of the Śaivas as follows: "What is the necessity of gifts or other vows or the Vedas or the sacrifices? The status of a Gaṇapati is sure to be attained as soon as ashes are besmeared on the body (there is) no virtue like the ashes, no austerity like these, the blind the humpbacked, the stupid, the illiterate or the members of the different castes such as the Śūdras if they are characterised by matted hair, are undoubtedly worthy of respect. Viśvāmitra though a Kshatriya, became a Brāhmaṇa by austerity. Vālmiki, a thief, became the foremost of Brāhmaṇs. So no discrimination should be made in this matter by the Śiva worshippers. One becomes a Brāhmaṇa by means of austerity and the determination of castes should be made in this way". Religious mysticism and a social egalitarian movement aided each other in this new evolution in Hinduism that could now successfully meet the challenge of the liberal, egalitarian heresy of Buddhism. No doubt the large influx of the Hellenes and other foreigners, most of whom could not appreciate the philosophical outlook of orthodox Brāhmanism, their hankering for personal religion and worship as well as the unloosening of the caste structure and of

the hold of the Brāhmaṇical priesthood due to racial admixture, were significant factors in the evolution of the ultimate forms of Śāivism, Bhāgavatism and Mahāyāna Buddhism. The two latter faiths founded themselves equally in a reconciliation of theistic faith with ancient metaphysical speculation, a Messianic hope and an egalitarian social trend. All this prepared the way for the Hinduisation of the Śakas and Kushāns who gradually adopted the names, manners, religions and languages of India. The son of Chashtana became Jayadāman, the son of Rājula was Śoḍāsa, the son of Chhagaliga became Vishṇudāsa. The Kushān Emperor Huviṣka was succeeded by Bazo-deo or Vāsudeva. Kadphises II and Vāsudeva represented in their coins the worship of Śiva. Such was the Hinduisation, especially of the Great Kushāns, that they played the most important role in the spread of Mahāyāna Buddhism in Middle Asia and China. On the other hand, the success of Hinduisation of the Yavanas, Śakas, Pāradas and Pahlavas (Parthians) is recorded by Manu who mentions them as Kshatriya tribes that suffered degradation due to non-observance of rituals and neglect of the Brāhmaṇ priesthood.

The Gothic Spirit in the National Art of Amaravati

India, south of the Vindhyas, did not experience the admixture of stocks, cultures and cults that the North under the Græco-Scythian kingdom witnessed. As in many later centuries, the South under a powerful Empire fully expressed and developed the real genius of Indian culture during the three centuries from the third quarter of the first century B.C., till the first quarter of the third century A.D. The Andhra Empire was both Hindu and Buddhist, and extending as it did from the Arabian sea-coast to the Bay of Bengal and enjoying fully the advantages of both Mediterranean and Indonesian trade, developed a cosmopolitanism and humanism that were fully utilised by the national genius. The result was an artistic renaissance evident in the sculptural work of Jaggayyapeta, Amarāvati, Nāgarjunikoṇḍa, Alluru, and Gummadidirru. The art of the Kṛṣṇa-Godāvarī Doab is free from the influence of the Roman-Gandhāran style of the North, on the one hand and links Bhārhut and Sāñchi with Classical Gupta art, on the other. At its height the art is Gothic in spirit, embodying a remarkable combination of human

sensitiveness and transcendental mystery hardly met with again in India. For its counterpart one has to go to Bengal of the Pālas, to Borobodur and China and to medieval France. The art reveals in crowded scenes, where human figure, plant and animal are juxtaposed in their rich tropical prolificness. The stalk of the lotus plant here swells to an enormous size but as it moves like a huge serpent, accompanied by running men, is as light and delicate as a garland of flowers, leaves and buds. The significance of the motif lies in its association with the Buddha whose presence is indicated by a throne. In the South Indian tropical environment, life is full, exuberant and multiplying, and not mellowed and tranquilized by the temper and experience of the Buddhist renunciation and abstraction. Thus the art of Amarāvati is full of scenes of human gatherings, songs, dances and movements in which many participate, and the multitude is integrated together by deep transcendental stirrings that cross the boundaries of the reliefs. In few sculptures of the world the scenes are so thick and eye-filling with human figures, yet bound together by a dynamic rhythm as well as by the profound piety underlying the myth and legend. Arms are upraised, shoulders bent, legs crossed, bent or lifted, and whole crowds simply abandon themselves in song, dance and ascent. The translation of the Buddha's begging-bowl at Amarāvati resembles in its compositional rhythm the Rāsa-Maṇḍala of medieval Rājput painting. Contrasted with the diagonals of active movements there are also parallels and verticals of langour scenes. There is the roundel at Amarāvati, depicting Prince Timiya who was sought to be lured by a bevy of women dancing and singing. Empty spaces are here utilised to stress langour, and foreshortening and over-secting of limbs to emphasise tension. In the whole field of Indian art the sculpture of Amarāvati is unparalleled in the superb blend of the devotional mood and sensuousness, the eased ecstasy and the earthiness of living. The scenes of the four women bowing at the feet of the Buddha, of men and women adoring the Stūpa and of the tense excitement at the descent of the Elephant of the Conception are characterised by a melting softness and spiritual ardour which underlie the rise of the Mahāyāna and Kṛṣṇa-Bhāgavatism. In many nude female figures in Amarāvati we have a unique combination of Botticellian slender grace with the purity and simplicity of the work of Fra Angelico, anticipating

the frescoes of Ajantā and Bāgh and the sculptures of Rheims and Chartres. The same spiritual fervour is discernible in the famous medallion, depicting the miracle of the infuriated elephant rushing at the crowd, and finally prostrating itself at the feet of the serene and smiling Buddha, who thus defeats the stratagem of Devadatta. Spiritual imagination here abolishes the difference between miracle and reality; the taming of the infuriated beast merely illustrates an intense emotional experience.

At Amarāvati we find allusive symbols as well as representations of the Buddha in numerous episodes of Buddhist legend. But whether the Buddha is actually represented in the human figure or not, there is manifest in each scene a touching bhakti towards the great Compassionate One (Mahākāruṇika). We have here also some of the most elegant nudes in the world's sculpture, but the sensuous appeal is subdued and refined by the moral ardour, the brooding sense of the impermanence of life and futility of sense enjoyment, as at Ajantā or Borobodur of the later ages. Unlike Ajantā and Borobodur, Amarāvati is, however, tense, earthly and agitated, and thus its naturalism is all the more delightful. Mahāyāna Buddhist religious piety has in the art of Pratiṣṭhāna spiritualised the naturalism of Bhārhut and Sāñchi and the sensuousness of Mathurā.

Southern Humanism and Cosmopolitanism

Such artistic idealism characterised by tremulous, ardent modelling and dynamic rhythm of the ensemble, though it lacks the greater clarity, poise and spirituality of Classical Gupta art, could not have been achieved but for an intensified awareness of life and its environment in the Sātavāhana period, of which we have an abundant testimony from the social side in the tales of love and adventure of the Bṛhatkathā of Guṇāḍhya, from the religious side in the construction of numerous Buddhist cave monasteries in the Deccan, and from the economic side in the development of overseas trade as is evident from the rich finds of Roman coins in the Southern ports.

The relative immunity from the inroads of the Śakas and other foreigners and the geographical position of the Empire of Pratiṣṭhāna in the heart of India with its enormous development of trade, commerce and cultural activity enabled it to

preserve the purity of the Indian æsthetic ideal and express in the agitated rhythms of its art an eternal poignancy and transcendentalism of human devotions reaching out to superhuman dimensions that the art of India and Greater India emulated in subsequent generations. In the north-west and in the heartland of India, the schools of Gandhāra and Amarāvati art flourished almost contemporaneously under the influence of the sudden outburst of culture, commerce and learning in the Græco-Scythian and Śātavāhana worlds. Amarāvati art was, however, truer to the national inspiration and faith of India, nourished as it was by the freedom and immunity from foreign inroads and aggressions under the Śātavāhana Empire that was not only a refuge for the national genius as opposed to the Śaka and Kushān Kingdoms, but was also a bridge between the Āryan civilization of the North and the Dravidian civilization of the South.

PART IV

THE FLOWERING OF INDIAN CIVILIZATION

CHAPTER XII

THE EPIC IDEALS OF HUMAN RELATIONS

Early Lays and Legends

As the Indo-Āryans crossed mountains and river valleys in the long march from their home-land into the valley of the Sarasvatī and the Dṛshadvatī, their mind was full of memories of heroic episodes and great happenings. These included not merely bitter and long continued wars between the Aryans and the non-Āryans, described as the Devas and the Asuras, in which warriors, sages and ascetics all participated but also feuds and conflicts between groups among the Indo-Āryans themselves. Gradually tales of war and victory, courage and loyalty, tragedy and grief crystallised themselves into epic song verses (gāthās), hero-lauds (nārāśamsis) and clan histories, (ākhyānas and itihāsas). These came to be embodied later on in the Brāhmaṇas and recited by the bards at intervals during the great Aśvamedha and other sacrifices that took several months at a stretch. Princes of the Kuru and Kośala kingdoms were among the celebrated sacrificers; and it is no wonder that legends of Ikshvāku and Hariścandra and of Arjuna, Parikṣit and Janamejaya, the first two of whom appear as gods in later Vedic literature, were sung from mouth to mouth in accompaniment with the lute or the seven-stringed lyre. The Śatapatha Brāhmaṇa makes mention of the hostility between the Kurus and the Sṛiñjayas, which in the Mahābhārata often looms as the battle of Kurukshetra, while a gāthā in the Chhāndogya Upaniṣad (IV, 17, 9-10), according to Hopkins, alludes to the disaster of the Kurus. Vālmiki and Vyāsa, the celebrated authors of the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata respectively, are mentioned in the later Vedic texts. Āśvalāyana and Pāṇini (5th century B.C.) refer to such lays and legends. The latter refers to the Mahābhārata and mentions the name of

Yudhiṣṭhira. Certain bas-reliefs of the 2nd century B.C. illustrate the tale of Daśaratha and Rāma. The Rāmāyaṇa is certainly older than the Mahābhārata which mentions Vālmiki as well as the epic itself, while the tale of the Pāndu kings of the Mahābhārata seems to be indicated by Greek writers of the fourth century B.C. who refer, to the Indian Herakles (Kṛṣṇa) and to Pandia (the Pāṇḍus). Kauṭilya's Arthaśāstra also refers to the stories of misdeeds of both Rāvaṇa and Duryodhana of the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata respectively. Jacobi points out that the Rāmāyaṇa must have been generally familiar as an ancient work before the Mahābhārata reached its final form. Sūkthankar suggests that the Rāmāyaṇa was composed in the interval which separated the Bhārata from the Mahābhārata, the Chaturviṃśatisahasrī and the Śatasahasrī. Most scholars consider that the Mahābhārata arose between the 2nd and 5th centuries A.D. Sylvain Levi observes in this connection that the Mahābhārata, Śatasahasrī Samhitā and *corpus absolutissimum* of the Brāhmaṇical Smṛti, pertains to the series of those great corpora which flourished even in the first centuries of Christian era, that is of the Śatasāhasrikā Prajñāpāramitā and of the Vinaya of the Mūlasarvāstivāda movements of Buddhism and of the Bṛhatkathā by Guṇāḍhya, a monument in profane literature.

Dharma in the Ramayana

The heroes and heroines, the fighting men and sages of both the Rāmāyaṇa and the Mahābhārata, have moulded the character of the people through the ages. The unswerving obedience of Rāma to truth and righteousness, to parents and people, the supreme loyalty and attachment of brother Lakshmaṇa, the fidelity and tenderness of Sītā "following her husband like a shadow," her heroism and serenity when she is under Rāvaṇa's grip and her fortitude and dignity as she faced the worst humiliation from Rāma, or the self-effacing devotion of Hanumān, all these repeated in magnificent poem (kāvyā) and poignant drama, thrilling song and sweet cradle-tale in all the languages of India, have been the perennial springs of goodness, justice, love and sacrifice of the Indian people through the generations.

Indian personality and virtues are writ large in the gods, heroes and heroines of the epics. National morality is embodied

in the colourful drama as it moves on from one end of each epic to the other. And what better clue to Indian character and civilisation can there be than the story of the composition of the first rhythm and śloka in Indian literature out of Vālmiki's overflowing compassion at the sight of the blood-stained bird krauñcha, killed mercilessly by the hunter and bewailed bitterly by its mate? The compassionate poet's admonition of the hunter marks the creation of the first rhyme in India. In this new inspired metre born of tenderness, pity and indignation, the whole of the Rāmāyaṇa was composed by Vālmiki.

Like its sister epic, the Rāmāyaṇa is a veritable encyclopædia of archetypal myths, tales and legends in which we find at once the combination of the din and roar of battles of titans and gods with the serenity of the forest hermitages of sages and ascetics, of the pomp and magnificence of stately capitals with the beauty and enchantment of rain, autumn and spring, of the cunning, treachery and inhumanity of vicious men and rākshasas, small and great, with the glorious human attributes of friendship, loyalty, sweetness and infinite tenderness towards man and beast. Over the kaleidoscopic succession of great episodes of war and peace and chequered human relations broods the spirit of righteousness (dharma) grounded in truth that ensures the victory of mortal man over destiny and death. The Rāmāyaṇa is a humane through heroic national epic, full to the brim of the milk of human kindness that is spilled on all sides over human and every sentient creature, and saturated with a profound love of nature and sense of the unity and continuity of life. It is the perennial main-spring in India of boundless love, compassion and self-effacement, of divine courage, fortitude and serenity in the face of human failings, conflicts and defeats. Every autumn the main episodes such as the meeting between the exiled Rāma and Bharata in the forest, the return of Rāma to Ayodhyā, the defeat of Rāvaṇa and the banishment of Sītā are acted as plays and pageants, while the worship of Devī by Rāma on the eve of the Battle of Lankā is commemorated by the autumnal festival of the Goddess throughout India.

The Myth of Agricultural Colonisation of the South

The story of the abduction of Sītā and her recovery by Rāma embodies a myth of agriculture and colonisation of the migrating

Āryan people as they marched to fresh fields and pastures new. Sitā is not born of human parents but sprung from the furrow as Janaka, king of Mithilā, ploughed the field and hallowed it. She is a daughter of the earth-goddess and literally means furrow. Rāmachandra is the moon-god, who rules the world of vegetation, and wins Sitā by his exhibition of strength in bending the marvellous heavy bow given by the gods. The bow is the implement of the hunting stage of civilisation; and Rāma as he strung, bent and broke the bow that neither gods, nor asuras nor men could wield, ushered in the richer agricultural civilisation, under the inspiration of the Kshatriya sage, Viśvāmitra, now a Brahmarshi. The Rāmāyaṇa hides the story of Āryan advance to the South, with the aid of various indigenous peoples with monkey, bird and other animal totems. Such myths that have already become obsolete in a sophisticated, civilised age of magnificent cities with their high walls and deep moats indicate vestiges of a distant social history.

The Rakshasa and Vanara Tribes

The colonisation and settlement of the South could not proceed without a fierce struggle with the Rākshasas, hostile tribes which opposed Brāhmaṇical rituals and institutions. But in the struggle the Vānaras, representing another group of tribes, proved a valuable ally to the Indo-Āryan cause. The Rākshas or Rākshasas are mentioned by Pāṇini as a tribe along with the Parśus (Persians) and Asuras (Assyrians); while in respect of the Vānaras of Kishkindhā, D. R. Bhandarkar refers to an inscription that mentions a ruling family in Dharwār described as "of the Bali race", "lords of Kishkindhā," "best of towns" and "bearing the device of an ape (kapi) on their banner". Kishkindhā is modern Bellary in Bombay Presidency. One of the homes of the Rākshasas is Janasthāna in the Godāvarī valley. Their connection with Laṅkā suggests that they were a sea-going people, while the Purāṇic tradition indicates their descent from the royal line of Vaiśālī - Paulastya Rākshasas or cruel Brahma Rākshasas, as these were called. The Rākshasa culture of the South was in no way inferior to the Indo-Āryan culture of the North. As Rāmachandra leaves the Ganges valley he comes across, according to the Rāmāyaṇa, vast forests extending across the Vindhya into the Dakṣiṇāpatha with Brāhmaṇa ascetics

living here and there in the region between Chitrakūṭa and the Pampā (tributary of the Tungabhadra), whose rituals and sacrifices were hindered by the Rākshasas. Rāmachandra's chastisement of the Rākshasas, at the instance of the ascetics in the Daṇḍaka forest, brought about the intervention of their guardian and lord, Rāvaṇa of Laṅkā. To wreak his vengeance on Rāma he stole Sitā. South India in the Rāmāyaṇa is largely covered by the dense jungle of Daṇḍakāraṇya, and no civilisation is encountered before Rāmachandra reaches Kishkindhā which constitutes the intermediate bastion of Āryan civilisation. Rāmachandra and his consort and brother are probably deities of a certain Āryan Ikshvāku clan of Kośala that after some court intrigue in Ayodhyā, started out on a colonisation enterprise in Dakṣiṇāpatha, and having safeguarded against Dravidian depredations the sporadic colonies of Brāhmaṇas in the trackless forests south of the Vindhya, reached as far as Laṅkā which it conquered from the Dravidian king with the assistance of the Vānara tribes. Both Rākshasas and Vānaras are names of actual tribes of South India. In the original Rāmāyaṇa, Laṅkā was a town, as pointed out by Jacobi. In Indian astronomy Laṅkā stands on the equator, where it is intersected by the meridian of Ujjayinī. The identification of Laṅkā with Ceylon came much later and is generally attributed to Buddhist sources. The alliance between the Princes of Kośala and the Dravidian Vānara tribes of Kishkindhā could be easily cemented because the former by marriage in the royal house of the Videhas of Mithilā went definitely against Brāhmaṇical orthodoxy, the kings of Magadha, where the Dravidian elements were dominant, being regarded as Śūdras in the Vedic period. Finally, Rāvaṇa, as Pargiter suggests, is a title of kings derived from the Tamil Iraivan. In the Purāṇas there is more than one Rāvaṇa or Dravidian prince. One of the Rāvaṇas was captured and imprisoned at Māhiṣmatī by Arjuna Kārtavīrya. In respect of the ten heads of the king of Laṅkā (Daśānana) the explanation may be that Rāvaṇa's personal Dravidian name when Sanskritised accounted for this monstrosity. Rāvaṇa is spoken of sometimes as having two arms and being otherwise beautiful, adept in the Vedas and devoted to Śiva.

The pioneer of Southern colonization, however, was not Rāmachandra, but Agastya who humbled the pride of the

Vindhya and obtained the right of access to the South, including Jāva and Sumātrā. It is significant that the Indian Archipelago, comprising "the seven flourishing realms" of Yavadvīpa, Suvarṇadvīpa and Malayadvīpa, first finds mention in literature along with the Dakṣiṇāpatha in the Rāmāyaṇa, (IV, 40, 36) and that Agastya is regarded as the patron saint of both South India and South-east Asia as Śiva-Guru. In Tinnevely, there is Agastya's Hill, where the missionary saint finally retired as an anchorite after finishing his mission of Brāhmanising the South.

Traces of Early Economic History

Another significant fact is that like Kṛṣṇa of the Mahābhārata, Rāmachandra is described as dark and blue, the colour of the non-Āryan people, although both are incarnations of Viṣṇu, the God of the blonde Āryans. Both the epics fuse present with past history. Rāma's conquest of Laṅkā under the guidance of Agastya, the Brāhmanic sage of Southern colonisation, who gave him the weapon and the mantra for over-powering Rāvaṇa in the final encounter, and the invaluable aid he obtained from hosts of Vānara tribes of the forests, where cannibals were also encountered, led by Hanūmān and Sugrīva, no doubt preserve the memory of a momentous phase of Indo-Āryan history.

Primitive races and peoples of the forests have their half-human, half-beastly guardians. The five chief monkeys on the mountain Rīṣyamukha that saw Sītā being carried away by Rāvaṇa and Jaṭāyu, king of the eagle-tribes, and his brother Sampati are leaders of the less advanced early folks of the jungle, won over to Āryan friendship and co-operation. The alliance between Āryan Rāma and non-Āryan Sugrīva is cemented by Hanumān making fire in primitive fashion with two pieces of wood and passing sunwise round it. That the Ikshvāku princes played a leading role in the Āryan settlement of the far South is indicated by the Vāyu Purāṇa which mentions two Ikshvāku Princes, Aśmaka and Mulaka, living in the Dakṣiṇāpatha. The capital of the former was Potana or Pauḍaṇya and that of the latter was Pratiṣṭhāna, according to Pāli literature. The Sutanipāṭa specifically mentions Bavarin, a Brāhman teacher of the king of Kośala, having settled in the territory of Aśaka (Aśmaka) on the Godāvarī, south of Paiṭhān (Pratiṣṭhāna). Ikshvāku

kings find also prominent mention in the Nāgārjunikoṇḍa and Jagayyapeta inscriptions of the South; they lived in the 3rd or 4th century A.D. But as the epic now stands the traces of early economic history that formed the nucleus of the Rāmāyaṇa are completely over-shadowed by heroic and elegant poetry and the inculcation of the Dharma of man that penetrates into every happening.

The Epic Deification of Man

It is remarkable that in both the epics Rāma and Kṛṣṇa are represented not as deities but as ideal men or super-men. The wicked Rāvaṇa obtained the boon from the Progenitor Brahmā that he cannot be slayed by either god or gandharva, yaksha or rākshasa. As Rāvaṇa oppressed the gods, the Supreme Being desired that he should be slayed by man. This is the mythical genesis of the humanity of Rāma. It is true that as the story unfolds, gods and sages stand before Rāma in reverence urging him to remember that he was the Supreme Being himself. But Rāmachandra seldom deviates from the position that he is nothing more and nothing less than man. In fact the stress of the Rāmāyaṇa is that of men becoming god-like or divine through discipline, self-restraint and the practice of Dharma that constitute the code of obligations of every man. There are episodes in the Rāmāyaṇa where Vālmiki indeed makes Rāma share the helplessness of every mortal before a superior enemy, as for instance, Indrajit. Viṣṇu's vehicle, Garuḍa, rescues both Rāma and Lakshmaṇa from the peril and as he departs observes: "By nature the Rākshasas have cunning shifts in fight, whilst thou, who art heroic and of pure spirits, reliest on thy simplicity alone for strength. Thou should'st never trust these Rākshasas in the field of battle, for they are deceitful. And allow me to depart, O Rāghava, and do thou entertain no curiosity, as to our friendship." Garuḍa, who is the servant of Viṣṇu yet leaves Rāma, who does not recollect nor takes advantage of his incarnation, after assuring him succour in need. Similarly Kṛṣṇa of the Mahābhārata is not the deity but the ideal man, seer and friend, and though now and then he slaughters demons, slays the king of the snakes, kills Kāṁsa and Hiraṇyakaśyapa, the stress is always on the human rather than the divine attributes. Kṛṣṇa himself says in the epic: "Whatever

I shall accomplish is due to my own will and power (*puruṣa-kāra*), nothing which is in any manner divine I can undertake". But Kṛṣṇa worship is established and promulgated in the Mahābhārata; and there is no more dramatic scene in the epic than the one in which Śiśupāla grudges Kṛṣṇa the chief rank and precedence in the coronation sacrifice of Yudhiṣṭhira, angrily protesting that he is neither a ruling monarch nor a Brāhmaṇ seer or teacher, and summons him to battle until Kṛṣṇa, for a long time forbearing and serene, kills him to the relief of the entire assembly.

There is a mythopœic descent of the gods in the epics—both Rāma and Kṛṣṇa are incarnations (*avatāras*) of Viṣṇu, the beneficent deity who rescues mankind through his rebirths from age to age whenever righteousness is overpowered by unrighteousness. But, as in the Rāmāyaṇa, so in the Mahābhārata, the divine incarnation is laid aside and Rāmachandra and Kṛṣṇa are presented as god-man, ideal man or super-man. The epics have captured the mind and soul of India because they revere along with the Supreme Being Nārāyaṇa, the Superman or the ideal man (*Narottama*) as well as the common man (*Nara*). "This is the holy mystery," unequivocally asserts the Mahābhārata, "there is nothing nobler than humanity." Man, absolutely every common man, is God.

The Rise of Krishna-Bhagavatism as Reform Movement

The Mahābhārata strikes a significant contemporary note as it gives a symbolical meaning to sacrificial offerings against which Asceticism, Jainism and Buddhism launched their emphatic protest. The delineation of the exploits of the Pāṇḍavas led by Arjuna and Kṛṣṇa Devakīputra, later on apotheosised into Nara and Nārāyaṇa, in the annals of the Bharatas (*Bhārati-kathā*) sung in Ayodhyā, Naimiṣāranya and Hastināpura developed into the scripture of the Bhāgavata cult what the epic really is. Devakīputra Śrī Kṛṣṇa of Mathurā must have been an outstanding spiritual leader, seer and reformer, who preached a theistic faith stressing the almighty, worshipful (*Bhagavān*) character of the deity before the time of the Buddha. The image of Herakles that Quintus Curtius mentions as being carried in front of the army of Poros arrayed against Alexander's forces was that of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the worship of the "Indian Herakles" being

associated with the Śūrasenas and the city of Mathurā. There were three outstanding features of this new cult that from the fifth to the first century B.C. was developing an all-India importance. Pāṇini refers to Vāsudevakas and Arjunakas, cults of worship of Śrī Kṛṣṇa and Arjuna, and an Udaipur inscription of the second century B.C. mentions the worship of Saṁkarṣaṇa and Vāsudeva; while Patañjali who lived about the same time quotes a sentence, "May the power of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, accompanied by Saṁkarṣaṇa, increase," and also refers to the dramatic recitals of Kāmsavadha and Bālivadha. The same sect was also early known as the Ārya Sātvata sect, practising a special type of yoga meditation of Vāmadeva according to the four-fold nature of the Divine. According to Yamunācārya, those who worship the Supreme God in purity of spirit are called Sātvatas and Bhāgavatas.

First, the new religion vies with Buddhism in replacing the ancient sacrifice of animals by the sacrifice of the desires and passions of life establishing a profound serenity of self. The Mahābhārata observes: "Engaged in the sacrifice of peace, possessed of self-control and employed also in the sacrifice of Brahman, the sacrifices I shall perform are those of speech, mind and deed. How can one like me celebrate an animal sacrifice which is full of cruelty? How can one endowed with wisdom perform, like a ghoulish, a sacrifice of destruction after the manner of the Kshatriyas—a sacrifice which brings only transitory rewards? I am born of my own self, O father, and without progeny I shall seek my own spiritual welfare. I shall offer the sacrifice of self, I require no children to buy my saviours." "No animal should be sacrificed in the Kṛta age", we read in the Śānti-parva of the epic. In another place the epic speaking of the merit of Vaishṇavism, mentions the performance of a horse sacrificial rite in which, however, no animal is killed. The emphasis of a simple, compassionate code of morality in the epic is also an answer to the Buddhist call to the law of altruism, to the noble eightfold Āryan path. When Kṛṣṇa says in the Mahābhārata, "Know that Dharma is my beloved, first-born mental son, whose nature is to have compassion on all creatures. In his character I exist among men, both present and past, through many varieties and forms of existence for the preservation and establishment of righteousness," the epic effects a striking reconciliation between the Buddhist

law of compassion and the new Bhāgavata faith and incarnation and immanence of the deity. It is significant that the simple, basic principles in which dharma is epitomised in the Mahābhārata are inscribed in the Garuḍa column of Heliodorus, the Greek convert to Bhāgavatism, in the second century B.C. at Besnagar near ancient Vidiśā, the capital of the Śuṅgas. "Three immortal precepts, when practised will lead to Heaven—self-restraint, renunciation and vigilance." The very words of the epic are repeated in the column.

The Stress of the Immanence of Deity

The second fundamental principle of Bhāgavatism embodied in the Mahābhārata is its re-interpretation of Dharma from both the metaphysical and moral side. Dharma as the primordial norm, sustaining the universe in Ṛgvedic and Buddhist thought and underlying and harmonising all differences, becomes transformed in the Mahābhārata into the realisation of the immanence of the deity. Dharma's eternal root principle becomes the knowledge that the Supreme Deity dwells in the hearts of all living beings. God, says Kṛṣṇa in the Aśvamedha Parva, takes his birth and lives among men in his infinite love for man. The incarnation of the divine is for the good of mankind (Jagatām upakāraṁ).

The third principle flows from the second, viz., the divinity of Man. This is the kernel of the teaching of the Mahābhārata. In the Bhagavad-gītā as Kṛṣṇa unfolds to Arjuna's wondering gaze his Universal Form, all-creating and all-devouring, gracious and terrible, transcendent and immanent, the latter is struck with both ecstasy and terror. God, who is impersonal and transcendental, then assumes his gracious human form (mānuṣaṁ rūpaṁ). Arjuna now obtains his bearings and is himself again. The transformation of the historical Kṛṣṇa, the seer and friend of Arjuna, into the deity is nothing new in India. For, according to the Brhadāranyaka Upanishad, "the worshipper becomes one with the god he truly sees". Thus formerly had the sage Vāmadeva, after realising the Supreme Truth, felt, "I am Manu, I am Sūrya"; and Indra himself said, "I am Prāṇa, I am the conscious self. Know me and worship me as life and as breath." Besides, the doctrine of the descent of God (avatāra) that found its first dramatic formulation in the fourth chapter of the Bhagavad-

gītā facilitated the identification of the historical individual with the Absolute, which "though eternal and immutable in essence passes through many births for the good of mankind." The apotheosis of Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva is completed when he is called Keśava or Lord of Brahmā (Ka) and Śiva (Īśa) in the Mahābhārata, and Govinda or Lord of Indra in the Harivaṁśa. The Bhagavad-gītā clenches the point by observing that the worship of Kṛṣṇa leads to Brahma-bhāva and salvation. The Mahābhārata finds and proclaims the Deity intimate, visible, human and personal. God in the Mahābhārata is the Mother, Father, Friend or Beloved, the counsellor, friend and guide of the Pāṇḍavas in their war of righteousness—the Battle of Bhārata—the protector of the honour of outraged Draupadī, the call of conscience for Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Droṇa on the eve of the great battle and the protective father of the forlorn Vṛṣṇi women of Dvārakā.

Besides Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva is the ruler of Mathurā and Dwārakā, the Saṅghamukhya (president) of the confederation of the republican tribes, the Vṛṣṇis, Yādavas, Andhakas, Kūkuras and Bhojas which he saves from internal disruption due to the party politics of Babhru, Ugrasena, Āhuka, and Akrūra, the political seer, prophet and builder of United India, the Pāṇḍavan empire (Mahābhārata) held by Yudhiṣṭhira for about thirty-six years. The epic has lost definite recollections of the great migrations and settlements of the Ṛgvedic Āryans. In the Vedic literature we find the Ganges-Jamunā Doāb occupied by the Kuru-Pāncālas of whom the Bharatas were the leading tribe. The epic takes up as its focus of interest, the northern Doab for which rival Āryan clans fight: the tribes of Southern Madhyadeśa, the Pāncālas and the Sṛñjayas against the Kurus. It has utilised tales and lays, referred also in some Upanishads and Brāhmaṇas relating to the hostility between the Sṛñjayas and the Kurus and the downfall and expulsion of the latter from the "Field of the Kurus" (Kurukṣetra). The defeat of the Kurus and the establishment of paramount sovereignty of the Pāṇḍava kings under the aegis of Kṛṣṇa Vāsudeva at the Kuru capital of Hastināpura situated on the Ganges (Anugaṅgam Hāstinapuram, says Patañjali) are gloriously depicted. The scene of the Battle of Bhārata is laid near Thānesar not far from another ancient capital Indraprastha on the Jamunā (Indapatta or Indapattana,

according to the Guttīla and Mahā-sutasoma Jātakas) and the epic makes all the Kshatriya princes and people of ancient India from the Himālayas to the Dravidian states of the south and from Dvārakā to Kāmarūpa participate in both the battle and the imperial coronation ceremony. The Kuru-Pāñchāla country had long ago lost the political importance it had at the time of the Bharata warrior kings, but became instead the most celebrated seat of Brahmanical learning, humming with hermitages and paṇḍas where the great bulk of literature of the Upanishads, the Brāhmaṇas and the Āraṇyakas was composed and Buddhism could never have any foothold. But the epic restores its political importance through the victory of the Pāṇḍavas over their kinsmen and proclamation of the imperial suzerainty of Yudhiṣṭhira. The sacred land which was *par excellence* the cradle of Vedic learning and culture should be, in the eyes of the epic, the natural political focus of the empire of the Bharatas. The "Tale of the Victory" (Jayānāma Itihāsa) reflects the ideas and achievements of Mauryan imperialism. Historians find in the epic references not to Emperor Chandragupta Maurya but to the "unconquerable" Aśoka and to the Yavana overlord of the lower Indus valley and his compatriot, Dattamitra, possibly Demetrios of Śākala. Kṛṣṇa, the inspirer of the Rājasūya sacrifice of the Pāṇḍavas, was fully alive to the danger of foreign conquest and the need of political integration of vast numbers of kingdoms stretching from Badarī in the north, the hermitage of Nara-Nārāyaṇa, to Kanyā Kumārī in the extreme south. The superman of the epic is *par excellence* the builder of Bhārata-varṣa.

The Dominant Cult of Sri Krishna-Narayana

The Mahābhārata achieves a synthesis of the superhuman attributes of Śrī Kṛṣṇa as the seer and speaker of the Bhagavad Gītā, the counsellor of Emperor Yudhiṣṭhira, the prince of Mathurā and Dvārakā, the associate of the cowherds of Gokula or Vraja, the pastoral country, and the Puruṣottama of the Yogis. The non-Āryan folk elements in the Śrī Kṛṣṇa-Nārāyaṇa cult are fully revealed not only in Kṛṣṇa's name as Govinda, the god of the cowherds or "cow-finder," his association in early life with Baladeva or Halāyudha, the god of husbandmen, in his destruction of demons and many marvellous

exploits such as the lifting of the Mount Govardhana (depicted in Gupta sculpture) to offset the devastation threatened by the Indo-Āryan God Indra in his wrath against the agricultural and pastoral folks, but also in his dark complexion, yellow apparel and the peacock feather in his headgear. Kṛṣṇa's non-Āryan filiation is shown by his marriage of the fair Chāṇḍālā girl Jambhavatī according to the Mahānagga Jātaka. Jambhavatī later on became transformed in the Purāṇas into Jāmbavatī, the daughter of the King of Bears. But the Kṛṣṇa-Nārāyaṇa cult achieves a most significant religious synthesis between Indo-Āryan Vedic worship and the non-Āryan Dravidian pūjā. The Vedic sacrifices, the epic warns, are not for the aspirants after the highest. "Those who offer sacrifices to the various gods go to the gods, the worshippers of the manes go to the manes, and the worshippers of the elemental powers and spirits go to them. So my (Kṛṣṇa's) devotees will come to me." And the Kṛṣṇa cult gives the message of hope of deliverance to the non-Āryans by adding that not only the Vedic sacrifices (yajñas) ultimately reach the Lord alone through the Vedic path but the offering with devotion of a leaf, a flower, a fruit, or water as in the non-Āryan ritual is also acceptable (The Bhagavad Gītā, 9, 25.25). According to Mark Collins 'pūjā' is a Dravidian word (Pu meaning flower, and gey meaning to do). S. K. Chatterji translates pūjā as flower ritual or puṣpā-karma which he contrasts with the Vedic fire oblation or paśu-karma. The cleansing of Vedic ritualism through the omission of animal slaughter and the four-fold metaphysical re-interpretation of sacrifices as daiva-yajña, jñāna yajña, saṁyama yajña and indriya yajña and the cleansing of the Dravidian pūjā ritualism through the emphasis of love and purity of heart are the great achievements of Śrī Kṛṣṇa of the epic. But the epic clearly indicates that the new dispensation was not accepted without serious opposition. Reinforcing the childhood legends of Kṛṣṇa as the slayer of Pūtānā, the epic here and there deifies the prophet of the new Bhāgavata cult, identifying him with Viṣṇu-Nārāyaṇa of the Vedic religion and stresses religious bhakti in such dramatic incidents as the outraged Draupadī's cry to Śrī Kṛṣṇa for the protection of her honour and Bhiṣma's final absorption in Him. For the Mahābhārata above all expounds the doctrine of Bhakti which could rally round various sections of orthodox Brāhmins

and wean them from the heresies of Buddhism and Jainism. The Bhagavad-gītā, the Nārāyaṇīya, the Viśvopākhyāna and other parts of the Mahābhārata equally emphasise the conceptions of a personal deity, immanence, bhakti, reverence and grace. The Kṛṣṇa-cult has inspired some of the best examples of Gupta art in the form of images. Some of the earliest Kṛṣṇa images are those of the 4th century A.D. at Mandor near Jodhpur, depicting beautiful Kṛṣṇa-scenes including the raising of Mount Govardhana. Near Udayagiri at Pāṭali there is a colossal Gupta relief (about 5th century A.D.) on the nativity of Kṛṣṇa lying by the side of Devakī, watched by five attendants. Reference may also be made to Kṛṣṇa-Nārāyaṇa placed by Skandagupta on the top of the Bhitari Lāt (about 460 A.D.) commemorating his victory over the Huns "which he reported to his mother who listened with tears of joy in her eyes, as Kṛṣṇa reported his victories to his mother Devakī". For the Imperial Guptas, fighting for the honour of the land and of Kula-Lakshmi that was being "shaken" and "overwhelmed" by the demoniac barbarians, Kṛṣṇa, "the slayer of Pūtana", was the special object of devotion and worship. In the age of the Mahābhārata along with the Kṛṣṇa-Bhāgavatas other theistic cults, such as the Pāsupatas and the Śāuras, worshipping Śiva and Sūrya respectively, arose. There were also worshippers of Skanda, Viśākhā, Vaiśravaṇa and Maṇibhadra. The more ancient folk deities such as Kuvera, the Nāgas and the Yakshas were also objects of devotion of the common people. Fissiparous religious trends were combated in the Mahābhārata by the doctrine that Vishnu and Śiva are identical and that the Supreme Being is one, the Ordainer who lives in the heart of everybody. The Mahābhārata speaks of the Triune (Trimūrti) Creator in the manifestation of Brahmā, Preserver in that of Vishnu and Destroyer in that of Śiva and also of Satya Nārāyaṇa as the one Supreme Being or Truth. Such are the attempts in the Mahābhārata to integrate a theistic faith with the earlier Upanishadic speculation, and rehabilitate Brāhmanism after a few centuries of Ājivika, Jain and Buddhist demolition of devas and emphasis of personal development as the aim of spiritual life.

The Emphasis of a Universalist Morality in the Mahābhārata

On the social side the Mahābhārata similarly combats the emphasis of asceticism in the new heresies, and finds no justification for persons abandoning their homes and families for the cloister of forests. Virtues can be achieved or lost in household and social life and relations. The true spirit of India is embodied in the following: "The householder (grhastha) shall have his life established in Brahman, shall pursue the eternal verities, and in all activities of life dedicate his works to Brahman". Thus the epic posits the doctrine of self-less action (niṣkāma karma) with a detachment of spirit. This, and not homelessness, opens the avenue to a virtuous and adequate life. Says the Mahābhārata, "Self-restraint, charity and vigilance—these are the three horses of Brahman. He who rides on the car of his soul, having yoked (three horses) with the help of reins of right behaviour, goes, O King, to the realm of Brahman, shaking off all fear of death. He who assures to all beings freedom from fear goes to the highest of regions, the blessed abode of Vishṇu".

Again, the Mahābhārata accepts the criticism of Buddhism against the emphasis of heredity, race or colour in the status system, and reiterates like the latter the ancient norm, the metaphysical principle of varṇa or social gradation according to spiritual status and moral responsibility. The epic stresses that the highest Sacrifices that man can undertake—the Śrāddha-yajñas, sacraments of devotion, are open to all including the Śūdras. "Even gods do not disdain to share the offerings of sacrifices of Śūdras when performed in such spirit. Therefore all the four varṇas are equal". Finally, the Mahābhārata is a compendium of the Indo-Āryan philosophies of state, law, morality, dharma and salvation, of ancient lore adjusted to the changing times and circumstances (yugadharma). The Śāntiparva gives a brilliant exposition of the duties of the king and of his relations to the various orders of the people, groups and institutions that have stood in good stead the monarchs of the later ages in the establishment of a sound polity. The King's ministers in the Mahābhārata comprised four Brāhmaṇas, eight Kshatriyas, twenty one Vaiśyas, three Śūdras and one Sūta—the

inclusion of the latter being a recognition of the importance and dignity of the lower castes.

Parasikas, Hunas and Sakas

While not too apprehensive of, or intolerant towards, the hordes of outlandish Mlecchas or barbarians such as the Yavanas, Pahlavas, Hūṇas and Pārasikas with their divergent customs, beliefs and ways of living, the epic is a challenge towards the realisation of the fundamental cultural and spiritual unity of Bhārata-varṣa and of political unification under a single suzerain. There is reference in the epic to the Yavana rule over Sauvīra or the lower Indus basin, and to another Yavana Prince Dattāmitra, sometimes identified with Demetrios. The epic prophesies that the Śakas and Yavanas will rule unrighteously in the evil age to come. Against such a national misfortune the Mahābhārata steels the heart of the people. It formulates a universalist code of dharma for all social classes and communities that serves as the strong enduring binder in a fluent racial and political scene. The Mahābhārata is the inspirer and builder of the unity of India amidst great, even baffling, diversity and complexity.

The Mahābhārata is a growth of centuries that saw not merely the influx of vast numbers of Yavanas, Hūṇas, Śakas and other foreigners and racial admixture (varṇasaṁkara), but also the spread of Āryan colonisation and settlement to the south beyond the Godāvarī and to the east beyond the Lauhitya or the Brahmaputra. The river hymn of the epic that replaced the ancient Ṛgvedic hymn clearly indicates the extension of the geographical horizon, and is even now repeated at the time of daily ablution: "O ye Gaṅgā, Yamunā, Godāvarī, Sarasvatī, Narmadā, Sindhu, Kāverī, join ye in this ablution water". Yet the centre of Āryan civilization was still the western portion of the Middle-land. Even the imperial capital of the Mauryas, viz., Pāṭaliputra is not mentioned in the epic which refers, however to the more ancient capital of Girivraja where were kept in confinement many princes for slaughter "as mighty elephants are kept in mountain caves by the lion". There are many forests even in the Madhyadeśa that are mentioned, such as Khāṇḍavavana, the Kāmyakavana and the Dvaitavana. The burning of the Khāṇḍavavana in the valley of the Jamunā and the expulsion of the Nāgas with their ruler, Takṣaka, who had to take refuge in the hills, represent

episodes where the Indo-Āryan and non-Āryan peoples met in bloody conflict. On the other hand, the marriage of Arjuna with Ulūpi, daughter of the Nāga king, Vāsukī, and of Bhīma with Hiḍimbī, daughter of a Rākshasa, represents a significant step towards racial assimilation of the two great peoples in the Jamunā Ganges basin.

The Mahabharata—an Epitome of the Indian Philosophy of Life

The Mahābhārata brings in old and ancient gods and religions and philosophical doctrines, now to scrutinise and reject, now to accommodate or reconcile. It is a repository of forgotten gods and heroes and of abandoned creeds and faiths. Yet it is a living embodiment of the new cult of Bhāgavatism and the philosophical doctrines of Bhakti and Karma—truly a Kṛṣṇa Veda, so significant for the social and religious history of the later ages—that from end to end of the moving drama interweave like warp and woof the tangled lives and fates of the various characters. The Mahābhārata epitomises the philosophy of life of India.

In spite of its eclecticism and assemblage of diverse social customs, moral doctrines and philosophical speculations, it remains for the people of India as a whole the enduring bed-rock on which their moral and spiritual values are rooted and practised; while the types of men and women it created such as Kṛṣṇa, Bhīma, Karṇa, Droṇa, Arjuna, Yudhiṣṭhira, Gāndhārī, Draupadī, Sāvitrī and Damayantī are some of the noblest that can be found in any civilization and are perennial living symbols and models of goodness, love and righteousness. It is the epic religion of Man, the conception of immanence of the deity in man, of Hari the Ordainer, Censor and Guide of all “sacrifices” of mind, speech and activity in every human heart (antar-yāmī) that has been the fountain-head of the development of such heroic, tender, self-effacing and delicate personalities and of their “imitations” through the centuries. There is no blessing in which Indian womanhood rejoices more than this; ‘Be like Sāvitrī and Damayantī’; no nobler exhortation to Indian manhood than ‘Act energetically like Arjuna responding to the call of his Divine charioteer (Pārtha-Sārathi)’; and no wiser counsel than “Pursue Truth and Justice like Yudhiṣṭhira, beloved of

Dharma.' And yet the epic constitutes a profound appeal to the modern heart and conscience. The anger and indignation of Draupadi enslaved and outraged by the insolent Duryodhana, the voluntary blind-folding of Gāndhārī to share the perpetual disability of her royal husband's blindness, Karṇa's disobedience to his mother revealing to him the secret of his illegitimate birth on the eve of the Great Battle, Ambā's frustrated love and fierce resolve to wreak her vengeance not upon the King of the Śālyas but upon Bhīṣma, Bhīṣma's vow of celibacy to enable his father to marry the lady of his choice, his unfolding to Yudhiṣṭhira and Arjuna the secret of slaying him in battle and his poise as he lies on his bed of arrows watching for death on the turning of the sun to the north, and the strange procession of the dead Kaurava princes and troops issuing out in the night from the dark waters of the Ganges in their full might and majesty before Dhṛtarāṣṭra and Gāndhārī whose aching grief is lightened, Yudhiṣṭhira pleading before God not to cast off the devoted dog in his ascent to heaven and his preference of hell where his presence may sooth his kinsmen and comrades—these are a few typical episodes that are thoroughly modern in tone and spirit, and have the same stirring perennial interest as the great richly human creations of contemporary literature. It is the tender and broad humanity of the Mahābhārata that accounts for its universal appeal. No wonder that the legends of the Mahābhārata were carried beyond the Indian Ocean to Kambuja (Indo-China) in the 6th century A.D. and to Mongolia in the 7th century and translated into the vernacular in Java by the tenth century. Even without their social and religious context the stories of the Mahābhārata, recited and dramatised, still arouse enthusiasm among peoples in other lands.

The Mahabharata as the Focus of a National Renaissance

Yet the Mahābhārata is intended not only for the common man of India, whom it educates and exhorts through numerous soul-stirring, didactic and narrative episodes, and for the Kshatriya prince, whom it teaches the life of valour and art of government, but also for the man of contemplation. The Bhagavad-Gītā is really the core and epitome of the voluminous Mahābhārata, the concise formulation of the religious and practical principles of the epic into a system. It was the same ṛṣi or

poet who composed both. The epic is integrated out of various stuffs and strands; the itihāsa or saga of the Bharatas and the Kshatriya tribes and princes sung by the bards; the various moral and religious folk-tales of different regions and peoples of India; the tales of sacredness of the holy places of pilgrimage recited locally; the myths and legends of the Ṛṣis oft repeated in their sylvan hermitages; the maxims and regulations derived from the current Purāṇas and Dharmaśāstras; and above all, the cult of Bhakti of the new Kṛṣṇa-Bhāgavatism. On the whole there is a remarkable unity in the whole composition, inspite of the opinions of Winternitz and Hopkins, who miss the basic design in their emphasis of the juxtaposition of the narrative and the didactic, and judge the Indian cultural product from the norms derived from Homeric criticism. In India kāvya, painting and sculpture often have not pursued an exclusively æsthetic purpose, and the Mahābhārata should be regarded at once as a narrative and a Dharma-saṁhitā without imposing any limits on the Indian literary tradition or the creative genius of an Indian poet. Linguistically speaking, the epic establishes the supremacy of Sanskrit as the national language of India. Vittore Pisani observes in this connection: "It is the greatest exponent of a reaction to the use of Prākṛit in the literature out of strictly Brahmanical circles, and of the successful attempt to give to profane India an over-regional and national language."

The Mahābhārata is a rallying focus of the social and religious revival that ultimately culminates in the Gupta renaissance and imperialism. It is a defence of the Brāhmanical society and scheme of life of the Vedic pattern against the inundation of exotic ideals due to foreign infiltration, invasion and conquest, and the spread of the heresies of Jainism and Buddhism that were threatening to dissipate the whole cultural heritage. The Mahābhārata owes its power and popularity in India to two factors: first, it is the expounding of a new faith, an ardent and catholic neo-Hinduism that integrates the current metaphysical theories of the Sāṅkhya and the Vedānta with a mystical, theistic emphasis of the Supreme Being; and second, it is the epitome and compendium of the ancient essential traditions of the Divine society that were threatened by foreign infiltration and conquest. The Mahābhārata, cognizant of the egalitarian spirit of Jainism and Buddhism and their vehement protest against

sacerdotalism and caste, reformulates the Vedic metaphysical ordering of Varna as well as the spiritual principle of fire rituals. In the epic the Vedic rituals and sacrifices are not rejected but invested with a new symbolic significance. The sacrifices now extolled are those of speech, mind and action. The more recent philosophical speculations of the Sāṅkhya and the Vedānta are reconciled with the sweeping current of Bhakti, the new religious manifestation assumed by Kṛṣṇa and Śiva-Bhāgavatism and Mahāyāna Buddhism. But the reconciliation is on the lines of the ancient mystical and philosophical tradition, as represented by the Śvetāśvatara Upanishad. The Brahman of the Upanishad and the Puruṣa of the Sāṅkhya become identical with Puruṣotama and Maheśa in the yoga of the Mahābhārata. Besides the Supreme Puruṣa, there are many Vedic and Purāṇic gods and goddesses, 'yakshas, nāgas, gandharvas and spirits of the woods and waters that receive allegiance in the Mahābhārata. But all derive their *raison d'être* from the Supreme Cosmic Being, Brahman or Truth, who appears in myriad forms according to the level and stage of social and individual culture. And the Supreme Deity lives in the heart of man, eliciting his love, devotion and self-surrender. The resuscitation of the Divine society takes place in the Mahābhārata in the fervour of devotion to the personal deity, Kṛṣṇa-Vāsudeva, which instils into the Indian man an undying faith in his inalienable spiritual destiny, and protects him against both the denationalisation by foreign influences and the disruptive monastic creed of the Buddha. Asceticism, renunciation and compassion that have become the basis of the religious reform of Jainism and Buddhism are not discounted, but given their place in a revised, flexible scheme of the duties and stages of Varṇāśrama and the reorientation of the heroic and moral traditions of the people. The withdrawal of the elite of the people to the monastery and the forest has been a national danger in an era of foreign invasion and subjugation. The Mahābhārata fights the battle against the foreigners as it sets forth the ideal of Śrī Kṛṣṇa, the supreme man of action, the happy warrior for Dharma's sake to whom victory is assured (*yato Kṛṣṇas tato dharma yato dharmas-tato jayaḥ*). The epic sings the deeds of courage, enterprise and sacrifice of the Bharatas and other famous ancient kings and warriors in a manner and context calculated to invigorate the

Indian nation in the grim fight against the hordes of the dangerous (dāruṇa) Śakas and Hūṇas that had invaded and conquered large parts of the Indus valley, Kāthiāwār and Mālwā. The composer of the Mahābhārata is at once a social reformer, a prophet of nationalism and a seer of a universal religion. The epic is a perennial reservoir of moral and spiritual strength and inspiration which has never failed the people of India in the crises of individual life and the vicissitudes of history.

CHAPTER XIII

THE REVOLUTION IN BUDDHISM: THE MAHĀYĀNA MYTH OF UNIVERSAL LOVE AND SALVATION

Asoka and Kanishka as Imperial Protectors of Buddhism

The conversion of Mahārāja Rājātirāja Devaputra Kanishka to Buddhism was more momentous for the history of Buddhism and Asian culture than the conversion of Dharmāśoka. This happened in the first century A.D. when the Kushān kings conquered the whole of Northern India. The Kushāns formed a section of the Yue-chi nomads of Central Asia, who were driven from their territory by the Huns about 165 B.C. and occupied Bactria. Thence the Kushān section of the horde migrated and entered Gandhāra. The Kushāns gradually built up an extensive empire under Kadphises I, that included the Punjab and Sind, Northern Gujerat, and part of Central India. He was succeeded by Kadphises II who embraced Śaivism and styled himself Maheśvara on his coins. Several scholars think that the conquest of Northern India by Kadphises II is commemorated by the so-called Śaka era of 78 A.D. Others attribute this to his successor Kanishka, who probably ruled from 120 to 162 A.D. at Purushapura or Peshawar. Kanishka's empire extended from Bactria, Gandhāra and Chinese Turkestan to Pāṭaliputra, and the monarch, according to one account, fought with the Emperor of China and compelled him to cede Khotan, Yarkand and Kāshghar on the southern caravan route to China and surrender certain hostages who were detained at Kanishka's capital in India. Kanishka had, indeed, built up a magnificent and rich empire, comprising congeries of peoples—Chinese, Indo-Greeks, Zoroastrians, Buddhists and Hindus—and attracting to itself the wealth of the then known civilized world by its trade and commerce, both by land and sea, that developed to an unprecedented extent. At his capital, he built a six hundred feet high wooden tower, enshrining certain Buddha relics, which was regarded as one of the wonders of the world. The pattern was that of Chinese pagoda crowned with an iron pinnacle that

supported bronze umbrellas, emblematic of the universal sovereignty of Dharma. The architect was Agesilaos the Greek (Agesala).

The Rise of the Mahayana at the Kundalavana Gathering

But Kanishka's undying fame rests on his patronage of Buddhism. He was said to have been converted by Aśvaghōṣa, (about second century) a most eminent poet, dramatist and philosopher of the age, who hailed from Ayodhyā, and who was perhaps forcibly carried away to his court. He composed the well-known Buddhacarita and several Buddhist plays for the propagation of Buddhism. A fragment of the manuscript of one of these latter, dealing with the conversion of Sāriputta and Moggallāna, has been found in Turfan in Central Asia. I-Tsing (671-695 A.D.) mentions that the Buddhacarita "is widely read or sung throughout the five divisions of India and the countries of the Southern Sea". The kāvyas of Aśvaghōṣa have extolled Gautama the Super-man (agrapudgala) in the same manner as the Mahābhārata and the Bhagavad Gītā have done Śrī Kṛṣṇa the Divine Man (puruṣottama). Kanishka was much puzzled by the various heresies that had arisen in Buddhism since the time of Buddha himself, and following the example of Aśoka, whom he tried to emulate and who had called the First Buddhist Council about 240 B.C., convened the last general Buddhist Council at the Kuṇḍalavana Monastery in Jālandhar (Kashmir) under the presidency of Pārśva. Celebrated scholars such as Aśvaghōṣa, Vasumitra and Nāgārjuna participated in the deliberations of the Council that continued for six months. This Buddhist Council, which was attended by five hundred monks from all parts of India and codified the Buddhist canon according to the Sarvāstivāda school, marked a new phase in the development of Buddhism. According to Tārānāth, soon after Kanishka's Council some Hīnayānic monks attained 'anuttarikadharma-khānti' (belief in the non-origination of all things) and began to deliver Mahāyānic discourses. These monks hailed from Aṅga and Odivisa (Orissa) and were sought by the devotees residing in other parts of India. About this time, Tārānāth adds, there suddenly appeared in different directions persons seeking Mahāyānic teachings, and these began to be delivered by Āryāvalokiteśvara, Guhyapati, Manjuśrī, Maitreya and others.

Mahāyāna, or the Great Vehicle, the name given to distinguish it from the primitive Buddhism, Hinayāna or the Little Vehicle, thus emerged in the first century A.D. under the leadership and stimulus of a galaxy of teachers such as Pārśva, Aśvaghoṣa, Amṛta, Nāgārjuna and Āryadeva.

The Rise of Buddha-Bhāgavatism

Mahāyāna Buddhism constitutes the conquest by Hinduism of the heart and soul of the ancient simple creed of the Buddha after a long bitter struggle for about five centuries. The change in the intellectual and social climate that had been going on in India for several centuries ushered in this revolution in the history of Buddhism. The revolution was partly due to the emphasis of reverence (śraddhā), devotion (bhakti), self-surrender (śaraṇāgati) and worship that bore the marks of the age, and that were characteristic of the Vaishṇava Bhāgavatas, Pāñcārātras and Śaiva Pāśupatas. The entire Buddhist world pinned its faith in the dictum: "I take refuge in the Buddha, in the Dharma and in the Saṅgha." But since the historical Buddha was dead and gone, the common men and women of India found their solace and inspiration in their passionate devotion and offerings before the symbols of the Buddha, such as the Footprints (pādukā), the Bodhi-tree, the Umbrella (rāja-chatra), the Wheel (dharma-cakra) or the Stūpa or again, as the Supernal Sun, the Pillar of Fire and the Tree of Life. Buddhist symbols elicited adoration and worship which transformed the austere, puritanic and rational Hinayāna into a world religion of love, devotion and faith—Buddha-Bhāgavatism. When we see in the fine, early Sanchi fragment Devadatta's drunken elephant bending low and taking the dust from the feet of the Buddha, who benignantly places upon his head a lotus-hand, as the monks stand by with folded hands in deep wonder and reverence, and in the beautiful Amarāvati relief (2nd century A.D.) the group of kneeling, worshipful women ardently supplicating before the footprints of the Buddha, we meet the ubiquitous elements of adoration (śaraṇāgati) and reverence (śraddhā) transforming the rational system of Gautama. The human founder of the religion no longer remained a matter of historic memory and imagination, but an eternal, benignant deity accompanied by his pantheon and host of saints. A rich

and luxuriant mythology came into being, centred round the many existences and perfections of Gautama the Bodhisattva, who after his sojourn on the earth for the alleviation of world misery, had finally returned to the Tuṣita heaven. Besides the spiritual note of bhakti, there was also in Mahāyāna a return to the Hindu metaphysical idealist and illusionist (māyā) doctrine of the world process as contrasted with the Hīnayāna doctrine of delusion (moha) and ignorance (avijñā) to which the latter had attributed man's bondage in the fetters of saṃsāra. The Mahāyāna gave up the specificity of the individual's mind, bondage and salvation for the conception of a primordial world mind, and for the universality of his spiritual charity and nirvāṇa, and in doing so claimed that it returned to the Buddha's original teaching. A dynamic, universal altruism flowing from the Buddha-nature, the cultivation of the pāramitās of the Bodhisattva dedicated to the establishment of heaven on earth through the relief of suffering mankind, and a profound veneration for the Compassionate One became the leading characteristics of the new dispensation.

Myth in Art and Metaphysics

It was in this religious climate of ardent devotionism and stress of the layman's approximation to the virtues of the Bodhisattva that about the beginning of the Christian era the image of the Buddha in human form that was no where discernible at Bhārhut, Sāñchi and Bodh-Gayā first made its debut in Northern India. By the third year of the reign of the Kushān Emperor Kanishka the indigenous school of sculpture at Mathurā stereotyped the Buddha image, working on the plastic technique and pattern of the ancient ascetic as well as Yaksha figures of Parkham in the neighbourhood—objects of veneration for the common people. The execution of the Buddha image ushered in the golden age of Mathurā sculpture. And such was the fervent adoration the Buddha image elicited among the people that within a century of its first appearance the earlier vogue of representation of the Buddha through symbols completely disappeared. Sculpture and the new devotional outlook of Buddhism, focussed round the Master as the Great Healer and the Great Compassionate One and the Bodhisattva with his numerous sacrifices for the alleviation of human suffering, aided each

other. Even the practical eightfold Path of Morality (*śīla*) of early Buddhism came to be less significant for the masses than the redemptive love of the supra-human Buddha imaged in temples with all his bodily signs and gestures (*Mahāpuruṣa-lakṣaṇa*) that the sculptor now depicted in full detail. The patternised image of the Buddha that profoundly influenced the art and worship of the entire Buddhist world had since then shown the protuberance on the skull, dot between the eyebrows, elongated ears, webbed fingers and the symbol of the wheel on the palms and soles. Buddhist myth, art and metaphysics, all underwent a rapid and complete transformation in the first two centuries of this millennium.

The Mahayana Doctrine of the Great Compassion

In the evolution of Buddhism the Bodhisattva became gradually the magic word focussing the fervent adoration of man and the infinite, redemptive compassion of the deity. The original simple Buddhism was completely transcended by the metaphysical conception of the numerous Mortal or *Mānuṣī* Buddhas (viz. *Kaśyapa*, *Vipassī*, *Konagammana*, *Śākyamuni* and *Maitreya*), Saviour Buddhas or Bodhisattvas (such as *Padmapāṇi*, *Samantabhadra*, *Mañjuśrī* and *Avalokiteśvara* and metaphysical or *Dhyānī* Buddhas (such as *Vairocana*, *Akṣobya*, *Ratna-sambhava*, *Amogha-siddha* and *Amitābha*), representing different levels of spiritual existence and classes of saviour beings. Literature, painting and sculpture, all opened up new vistas for the worshipful Buddhist multitude. Both the schools of *Gāndhāra* and *Mathurā* vied with each other in producing elegant, poised and serene figures of the Buddha and the Bodhisattva along with sacred scenes from the Buddha's life and the *Jātakas* in great abundance in the first and second centuries for the common people of India, and gradually the Hellenistic elements of form and decoration hailing from the north-west were subordinated to Indian piety and devotion. From the very beginning the *Mathurā* image, working on the indigenous traditions of *Yaksha*, sometimes called *Bhagavān*, and the sentiments of folk devotion, indeed differentiated itself from the *Gāndhāran* type. The latter was Greco-Roman in its pattern, though modified by Indian norms and predilections, and was lifeless, crude and naturalistic from the Indian viewpoint. It yet contributed the well-nigh ubiquitous diaphanous robe to the rendering of the Buddha figure. But both the ancient folk belief, faith and imagination as well as

the rise of the new philosophy and bhakti stressed the notion of the cult image. Mathurā loved to call and depict the Buddha as the Bodhisattva, and gradually Indianised Gāndhāran sculpture, that served the Buddhist order for as many as five centuries until it blossomed forth into a magnificent Gothic phase immediately before it was swept away by the tide of the Ephthalite invasion. The ancient metaphysics of the land instilled a spiritual depth and passion into Buddhist sculptures through its doctrines of the immanence of the deity and the unity of all life, and above all the spirit of man's tender piety and self-surrender, be he saint or sinner. Such were also the dominating notes of both the Bhagavad-gītā and the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka in contemporary thought. The universe of the Buddhist under the influence of the Mahāyāna came to be filled in every nook and corner with the Bodhisattvas who answered the prayers of the faithful, and were anxious to transfer their own merit to the sinful, the ignorant and the suffering. "The Buddhas who have been, are, and will be, are more numerous than the grains of sand on the banks of the Ganges," observes the Aparimita-dhāraṇī. No longer were the followers of Dhamma to depend solely on their own effort for salvation. The Avalokiteśvara Bodhisattva (who "looks down from high") even descends to hell for the salvation of sinners. The paths of morality and knowledge were not of course disregarded, but worship and devotion became more important for leading the faithful to the paradise where there were eternal worship and compassion, music and illumination.

The Doctrine of Avatara

Such a change that is rooted in the common psychology of all laymen and perhaps of most monks, was speeded up by the influx of vast numbers of the Śakas, Parthians, Kushans and other foreigners and the infiltration of new influences—Greek, Christian, Zoroastrian, Central Asian and Chinese—that created a unique favourable environment in Gāndhāra and Kashmir for a new ideological pattern. In Western Asia small bands of Christians were adoring Jesus as the Saviour of Mankind. There also arose at this time in India the doctrine of the descent of the gods (avatāra). This may have something to do with the impact of Zoroastrianism in which there are several incarnate manifestations of a deity called Verethraghna, and of Christianity, especially of Nestorianism, which

had reached the borderlands of India before this time. Nor can we disregard the influence of the apotheosis of the Roman Emperor in the age of Augustus. In the imperial religion of the contemporary Roman world at the zenith of its power and prosperity, divine essence and power were attributed to the Emperor. Both his birth and childhood were sought to be associated with occult signs and miracles, while on the throne he was extolled and worshipped as the Saviour of the World, vouchsafing love and compassion to mankind. Such an ultra-mundane doctrine promising universal grace and redemption must have travelled from the Mediterranean through the Indo-Levantine route to Gāndhāra and North-west India. The doctrine of incarnation could be discerned almost simultaneously in Hinduism, Jainism and Buddhism and it is significant that it was in Gāndhāra where the foreign influences were the strongest that the theory of the Bodhisattva incarnations dedicated to the Great Compassion seemed to have been first adopted by the Mahāyāna doctors.

The New Social and Intellectual Climate

It was the Mahā-sangika sect of Buddhism which first officially formulated the avatāra doctrine, but this rapidly spread to other sects of the Mahāyāna. Henceforth the historical Buddha recedes into the background; he is but a glimpse, a faint image of the real metaphysical Buddha reigning eternally in the Tusita heaven. The Buddha who is to descend to the earth is Maitreya and Amitābha. The former has filiation with the Brahmanical god, Mitra, sun and friend; and the latter is reminiscent of the Zoroastrian Sun-god. Both Buddhist theology and art invariably gravitated to the adoration not of Śākyamuni, but of the various Buddhas and Bodhisattvas that bore a strong resemblance to the deities of Hindu worship and devotion. The sculpture of both Mathurā and Gāndhāra also introduced into the Buddhist pantheon worshipful Indra, Kuvera and Gandharvas, male and female, from the Hindu world to strengthen the new devotionism of the Bodhisattvayāna.

For the Hindu world the Bhagavad-gītā reached a most remarkable synthesis of knowledge, yoga and devotion in Bhāgavatism and the worship of Puruṣottama and Kṛṣṇa-avatāra. Mahāyāna Buddhism is a species of the same Hindu genus, Bhāgavatism, in the contemporary Indian religious climate, introduced and popularised

through the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka and the noble works of Aśvaghoṣa, who at the court of Kanishka in Purushapura wrote perhaps the earliest classical Sanskrit Kāvya, anticipated the kāvya and dramas of Bhāsa and Kālidāsa and produced certain remarkable ideal characters, corresponding to those of the Hindu epics, for the Buddhist world. Aśvaghoṣa is eloquent of the personal devotion or bhakti of the Śākyas to the Master. He uses the following epithets in respect of the Buddha—the great benefactor, compassionate like the parents, the puller of the dirt and stealer of sorrow from the seekers of the refuge (śokasya hartā śaraṇāgatānām). It is probable that the Bhagavad-gītā influenced the corresponding principal Mahāyāna scripture, the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka, and the devotional writings of Aśvaghoṣa, such as the Buddhacarita, the Sutrālaṅkāra and the Mahāyāna-śraddhotpāda. These along with the Divyāvādāna, the Lalitavistāra, the Lankāvatāra-sūtra and the Mahāprajñāpāramitā-sūtra comprise the major earliest texts of the Mahāyāna, all breathing universal aspects of human devotion, goodness and salvation.

The Rise into Importance of the Buddhist Laity

But the change can be attributed still more to the development of complexity in the early simple Buddhist creed which had assimilated all that it could from Brahmanism in the Ganges valley, but now had to reach out beyond the monastic, puritanical and restricted outlook of the Arhat of old for the fulfilment of the imperative, contemporary need of combining activity with renunciation and wisdom with love in a more spacious age and a more prosperous sophisticated urban civilisation at one of the junctions of the great routes of world commerce and cultural intercourse. The major innovation in the Buddhist world was the eclipse of monkhood and rise into importance of the laity. Has not the Buddha himself been a lay man and not a monk during all his previous births and heroic deeds of charity? With the new emphasis that the Buddhahood belongs to the laity, the religion of Śākyamuni issued forth from the monasteries to the fields, markets and cities. There was a sudden upsurge of spiritual life among the common people who were taught through the love of neighbour as oneself and the exercise of the familiar virtues of domestic life, sacrifice and compassion to prepare themselves for the heroic sacrifices giving them the status of Bodhisattvas in future births. The laity obviously could now

aspire to the highest perfections of the future Buddhas. The all-merciful, ever-compassionate Bodhisattvas have come down to lead all creatures of the earth to the all-perfect illumination, goodness and beauty. It is this spiritual miracle wrought by the infinite tenderness and sublime charity of the Buddhist deities—Avalokiteśvara, Maitreya, Bhaiṣajyaguru, Kṣitigarbha and Mañjuśrī—that answers a real longing of the human heart. Man's intellect also obtains supreme satisfaction from the Yogācāra idealistic doctrine that neither the ego nor the world exists, but all melt in the Thusness (tathātā)—the transcendental Buddha in which the distinction between ego and non-ego, between saṃsāra and nirvāṇa fades away, and the multitude of beings finds integral, collective salvation. In the tathātā (absolute nature or vacuity of things) all contraries are reconciled and man penetrates into the final identity between the self and other, shedding the light of benevolence and compassion on humanity, "like a great sun from the summit of his heights". This was no small psychological revolution in India introducing or renewing a spirit of profound love, benevolence and sacrifice with a noble conception of the glory and moral grandeur of the average man.

Hinayāna Buddhism already lost its hold on the people of India at the end of the last millennium with the revival of Brāhmanism in the form of Bhāgavatism that incidentally was prominent in the same area of foreign infiltration and influence in North-western and Western India which gave birth to the Mahayāna. But it is significant that as Buddhism became more "Brahmanised", it appealed to the more universal aspects of human wisdom and goodness; and for well-nigh six centuries the initiative in Indian thought definitely passed over into Buddhism. The social and economic conditions from Gujerat and Sind to Gandhāra and Kashmir were no doubt completely in favour of the creed overflowing the limits of the Order into the life of the common people that meant the reconciliation of prajñā with activity and of nirvāṇa with saṃsāra. In the Mahāyānist text *Vimalakīrti-Niddeśa*, we read that Vimalakīrti lives in the city of Vaiśālī as a simple layman, yet observing the pure monastic discipline; though living at home, yet never desirous of anything; though possessing a wife and children, always exercising pure virtues; though surrounded by his family, holding aloof from worldly pleasures; though using the jewelled ornaments of the world, yet adorned with spiritual

splendour; though eating and drinking, yet enjoying the flavour of the rapture of meditation; though profiting by all professions, yet far above being absorbed by them; preaching the Law when among wealthy people; teaching the Kshatriyas patience; removing arrogance when among the Brāhmanas; teaching justice to the great ministers; teaching loyalty and filial piety to the prince; teaching honesty to the ladies of the court; persuading the masses to cherish virtue. The worldly life becomes in the Mahāyāna a veritable heaven for the Bodhisattva's spiritual illumination, unselfish teaching and compassion to fellow-men, including the sinners, debauches and outcasts. This overflow did not occur in the same measure in Hinduism. In the Bodhisattva-nāya Mahāyāna, compassion became the essence of the new interpretation, giving it a momentous impulsion that carried it beyond mountains, deserts and seas to distant lands and peoples.

Relations between the Mahayana and Hindu Metaphysics

The dialectic of the Sūttas in Buddhism was gradually replaced by a profound philosophy in the Mahāyāna which was also powerfully influenced by the contemporary metaphysical movements in Brāhmanism. This was facilitated by the fact that the leading Mahāyāna metaphysicians, Aśvaghoṣa and Nāgārjūna, were well trained in Brāhmanical thought and were, in fact, the leading intellectuals of India. The former was one of the founders of *Śaṃskṛta Kāvya*, a celebrated musician and discoverer of a musical instrument and author of such distinguished Mahāyāna texts in Sanskrit as the *Buddha-carita*, the *Sūtrālamkāra* and the *Mahāyāna-śraddhotpāda*. The Mahāyāna doctors gave an elegant, literary Sanskrit form to the Buddhist sūtras in order to make these easily acceptable for the elite, trained in classicism, as they incorporated Brahmanic metaphysical doctrines into the new interpretation. In the first place, the Mahāyāna doctrine abandoned its moorings in the Sāṃkhya system with its conception of the isolation and multiplicity of *Puruṣas*, pertaining to the nature of the windowless "monads" of Leibniz, but, stressed the psychic unity and interdependence of Being. Aśvaghoṣa developed what is described as the philosophy of Suchness (*Tathātā*). He puts it briefly as follows: In the soul we may distinguish two aspects. The one is the soul as Suchness, the other is the soul as birth and death. Each in itself constitutes all things, and both are so closely

interrelated that one cannot be separated from the other. What is meant by the soul as Suchness, is the oneness of the totality of things, the great all-including whole, the quintessence of the doctrine—for the essential nature of the soul is uncreate and eternal. The above reminds us of the Akṣara and Kṣara soul of the Bhagavad-gītā. All things in their metaphysical origin come from the immortal Suchness, the Tathāgata-womb, the Ground, the eternal, universal Being or the Dharmakāya. But the Mahāyāna attributes to the transcendent Suchness both the effulgence of infinite wisdom and ardent infinite striving for the relief of world-misery. All the Buddhas, while at the stage of Suchness, feel a profound compassion (mahākaraṇā) for all beings and practise all the virtues (pāramitās) and many other meritorious deeds. They treat other beings as their own selves, and wish to work out the universal salvation of all humanity in ages to come, through limitless numbers of æons (kalpas). They recognise truthfully and adequately the principle of equality (samatā) among people, and do not cling to the individual existence of a sentient being. That is what is meant by the activity of the Tathāgata.

The Mahayana Doctrine of the Trikaya

There is no doubt that this interpretation of Buddhist doctrine follows the basic teaching of the Upaniṣads, and to the modern mind seems much more satisfactory than the Vedānta as interpreted by Śaṅkara. In the Mahāyāna the doctrine of the Trikāya or the Three Bodies or Manifestations of the Buddha is also fundamental. The three Manifestations are:—

- (a) The Dharmakāya or Essence or Ideal Nature, undivided and common to all the Buddhas. This is the Absolute, the Transcendent or the Tathātā.
- (b) The Sambhogakāya or the manifestation of Bliss, varying according to the planes of the different Buddhas. This is the superhuman body of Buddha, enjoying his bliss, wisdom and glory and as manifest in saints in the heaven, Gods or Īśvaras.
- (c) The Nirmāṇakāya or the loving and serving human Buddhas in his incarnations. This is the assumed human body of the Absolute as manifest in imperfect beings.

The germs of the Trikāya doctrine are to be found in the Hīnayāna in the threefold conception of the self: (a) material possessing

a form consisting of the four great elements, (b) spiritual enclosed within the former, and (c) formless and supernatural that embraces all the worlds (Dīgha Nikāya XVI, 3, 41-47). In the Nikāyas Buddha is often described as neither a man nor a god nor a gandharva nor a yaksha; he may live for a kalpa or part of it in his supernatural arūpa essence. The Tathāgata has his manomaya-rūpa which can appear or disappear and live for long and is dharma identified with Brahṁā and the Ātmā, higher than arūpa beings. Thus the way is prepared for later Mahāyāna speculations in respect of the threefold body or manifestation of the Buddha. In the Trikāya doctrine again we see a metaphysical position similar to that of the Bhagavadgītā, the Dharmakāya corresponding to the Brahman, non-dual, eternal and unconditioned, the Sambhogakāya corresponding to the Lord or Īśvara, and the Nirmāṇakāya corresponding to every individual soul or the Avatāra immanent in every human being. But Mahāyāna theism, as embodied in the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka, emphasises that it is only in appearance that there are three Manifestations, viz., that of the human being, that of the Pratyeka-Buddha and that of the Bodhisattva by means of which nirvāṇa can be attained. It is only by the compassion of the Buddha that all of them, as many as there are grains of sand in the river Ganges, alike attain enlightenment and become Buddhas. Hinduism, Jainism, Christianity, Nestorianism and Manichæism, all probably have contributed towards the formulation of the Mahāyāna Buddhist theory of Trikāya for clarification of the relations between the Buddha-state and the world and the associated religious zeal for relief of world sorrow and belief in the divine grace of the Buddha and the Bodhisattvas being shed on entire humanity. The Mahāyāna Trikāya dogma subtly integrates the notions of transcendence, incarnation and grace of the deity, and underlies the dynamic ideal of the Bodhisattva, bent compassionately over the pain and suffering of humanity, and directing it towards the Absolute.

The Parallelism between the Gita and Pundarika

In the Mahāyāna Buddhist world, the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka (beginning of the 3rd century A.D.) or the Lotus of the True Law has the same pre-eminence as the Bhāgavad-gītā in the Hindu world. It is accordingly the most extensively read Indian scripture which has given inspiration to millions of Buddhists in China, Japan,

Central Asia and Southern Asia. As a matter of fact, it may be regarded as the fresh Buddhist rejoinder and challenge to Hinduism. The *Gītā* and the *Puṇḍarīka* are the gospels of Kṛṣṇa and Buddha-Bhāgavatism respectively, both equally saturated with bhakti as well as metaphysical idealism. Both expound that in spiritual life faith (śraddhā) comes before knowledge. The *Gītā* says: "He who has faith, perseverance in his quest and mastery over his senses gains knowledge and attains quickly the supreme peace". The *Puṇḍarīka* similarly teaches: "It is not only by reasoning that the Law is to be found; it is beyond the pale of reasoning, and must be learned from the Tathāgata". In the *Gītā*, Kṛṣṇa, after explaining the inter-relations between the Brahman, the deity and the individual soul, provides for mankind a Messianic hope of deliverance through the Divine grace (prasāda). The Buddha in the Lotus of the True Law similarly proclaims both wisdom and love, and in a more decisively compassionate vein. "I am the Tathāgata, O ye gods and men, the Arhat, the perfectly Enlightened One; having reached the shore myself, I carry others to the shore; being free, I make free; being comforted, I comfort: being perfectly at rest, I lead others to rest. I shall refresh all beings whose bodies are withered, who are clogged to the triple world. I shall bring to felicity those that are pining away with toil, give them pleasure and final rest. The strength of compassion or kindness is my abode; the apparel of forbearance is my robe; and voidness or complete abstraction is my seat; let the preacher take his stand on this and preach." In the *Gītā*, Kṛṣṇa declares to suffering, distracted humanity that "He has successive rebirths from age to age for the succour of the righteous, for the destruction of the wicked, and for the establishment of dharma". In the Lotus, the Buddha also declares that "He is repeatedly born into the world of living" for giving them final rest and deliverance.

The Messianic promise is indeed couched in words almost similar to those of the *Gītā*. We read again in the *Puṇḍarīka*; "When men become unbelieving, ignorant, fond of sensual pleasures, then I who know the course of the world declare, I am the Tathāgata, and I consider how I may incline them to enlightenment, how I may make them partakers of the Buddha Law." "Ye are my children, I am your Father, who has removed you from pain, from the triple world, from fear and danger when you had been burning

for many kotis of aeons." Both the Gītā and the Puṇḍarīka also lay stress not on homelessness and inaction but on detachment. The Gītā says: "Let not the fruits of action be thy motive, neither let there be in thee any attachment to inaction." The Lotus observes: "Always try, unattached to suppress desire. It is an infallible means of deliverance; for by practising this method we shall become emancipated". The final message of the Gītā is: "Abandoning all supports, come to Me alone for refuge; fear not, for I will liberate thee from all sins". The Puṇḍarīka's final message is similar: "Hearken to me, ye hosts of gods and men: I am the Tathāgata who has no superior, who appears in this world to liberate. To thousands of kotis of living creatures, I preach a pure and most bright Law that has but one scope, deliverance and rest."

'Buddhas Ye Shall become:' the Universality of Nirvana

In the new gospel, all sentient beings, "as numerous as the sands of the Ganges", even those who are low, immoral and wicked, shall become Buddhas and win their way to Nirvāṇa. For, as the Puṇḍarīka says, "There is but one Nirvāṇa, not two, not three"; and the universal illumination and compassion of their Leader, who is the Father of them, shall lead them all to this collective goal. The Puṇḍarīka, like the Gītā, leans on devotion to the Eternal Lord and Father, who is also sometimes called Nārāyaṇa, but is very much stronger in its emphasis of universal salvation for all living creatures. Nirvāṇa in the Mahāyāna is not annihilation but eternal life and activity. The Lord's body, says the Puṇḍarīka, has existed entire in thousands of millions of regions; during a number of millions of aeons beyond comprehension he has taught the Law to all the creatures. Knowing them to be perverted, infatuated and ignorant, the Lord teaches final rest, himself not being at rest. Infinite is the compassion of the Teacher of gods and men. "Buddhas ye shall become. Rejoice and be no longer doubtful or uncertain. I am the Father of you all". Just as the Mahāyāna rejects the doctrine of Nirvāṇa as personal final release and absolute extinction of life, it also gives a trans-human direction to the virtues (pāramitās) of the Hīnayāna. The Bodhisattva is a being, who having reached the "shore" voluntarily abstains from deliverance and rest, submits to an immeasurable cycle of births to save mankind, transferring (parivarta) his own meritorious deeds to others.

In Asanga we read: "The Compassionate One suffers in considering that the world is pain. He suffers and takes pity. Pity for the wretched, pity for the wrathful, pity for the hot-tempered, pity for the heedless, pity for the servants of matter, pity for stubbornness in error". The desire, sin, ignorance and wretchedness of man are indeed the polluted, fertile soil of the blossoming of the Bodhisattva—the Refuge and the Liberator given over to the Great Compassion. The Mahāyāna is not at all satisfied with the personal salvation of each individual that was the goal of the Hinayānists, often derisively described as "the Listeners" in the Mahāyāna texts. Now the laity prepares itself, thanks to the merciful intervention of the Bodhisattva who supersedes the notion of the unique Buddha, for an all-embracing omniscience and saintliness that unite all beings of the universe in an effable communion. Thus "for the human caravan which follows the path of life, greedy for happiness, behold the banquet of happiness prepared at which all comers may satisfy themselves". Mahāyāna morals are inseparably bound up with a metaphysics positing the identity of illumination with dynamic, all-pervasive and entire charity and compassion. Rarely in the history of world religion do philosophy, spiritual ecstasy and morality harness their combined resources for activating such sublime reverence, love and goodness among the humble folk as is inspired by the Mahāyāna thought: "To serve the creatures is to serve the Buddhas".

CHAPTER XIV

THE BODHISATTVA ON THE ASIAN HIGHROADS

The Beyond-social Morality of the Mahayana

The influence of Buddhism on Asian life and thought was mainly due to the subtle blending of metaphysical and mystical speculation with transcendental moral idealism in the Mahāyāna. Mahāyāna ethics not merely confirmed but also strengthened and expanded the code of Pañca-śīlāni of the primitive Buddhist community. This was largely the out-come of the original doctrines and inner vision of a galaxy of poets and philosophers of the Buddhist Yogācāra and Mādhyamika schools that flourished in the early centuries of this millennium. Philosophy, poetry and art, all combined to reveal the glory of prajñāpāramita or perfection of wisdom of the Bodhisattva whose ardent passion for the relief of world sorrow now became the *raison d'être* of Buddhism. The predominant emphasis was the association of sapience with charity. "The Bodhisattva"—the hero and saviour of the new gospel—"looks upon creatures, whom he thus serves by giving, as more beneficent than himself, telling himself that they are the framework of the all-perfect and insurpassable Illumination." With the rise and spread of the Mahāyāna doctrine, whose influence has been far greater on Asian culture than that of Hinduism, compassion or pity has indeed become the key-word in Asian ethics. In the Mahāyāna, transcendental idealism and beyond-social morality become inseparable. The transcendental illumination or pure knowledge, Āsanga observes, at once translates itself into all-loving kindness and all-compassion. The Bodhisattva's love of giving and sharing is insatiable. He is the Self-born, the Healer, the Protector of all creatures, who loves and serves creatures for the sake of love and service, on the basis of profound detachment and understanding that in Bodhi nothing dual exists, nor is any thought of the self and the world present. Nirvāṇa (enlightenment) and saṃsāra (the world of births and deaths) are in essence one (Yas saṃsārah tat nirvāṇam), and so also are wisdom and sin (Yaḥ kleśas so bodhi). It is contrary to reason to imagine that the

one lies outside the pale of the other, and, therefore, that we can attain enlightenment after we have annihilated or escaped the world of births and deaths. "If we are not hampered by our confused subjectivity, this our worldly life is an activity of Nirvāṇa itself". "All sins are transformed into the constituents of enlightenment, the vicissitudes of saṃsāra transformed into the beatitudes of Nirvāṇa". Thus observes Vasubandhu. Similarly Āsaṅga writes: "In the transcendent sense there is no distinction between transmigration and nirvāṇa". The worldly life, though fleeting and unreal, is of deep import to the Bodhisattva. The Vimalakīrti Sūtra says: "Just as the lotus flowers do not grow on the dry land, but spring from the dark and watery mud, so is it with the heart of wisdom, bodhicitta. It is through passion and sin that the seeds and sprouts of Buddhahood are able to grow." In Asia, the moral ideal is the Enlightened, the Emancipated and the Compassionate Man. In Brahmanical culture the Sage (Muni) or the Emancipated One (Jīvanmukta) lives in profound detachment in the world, true to his vocation and compassionate to all. In Mahāyāna Buddhism, that lays a greater stress on altruism, the ideal man, the Bodhisattva, seeks enlightenment for the sake of the salvation of all other creatures and strives to reach this, first by infinite compassion for the creatures, and second, by mystical contemplation that gives him the supreme understanding of the unreality of self, non-self and all phenomena. The unreality of the self, non-self and the world is not at all inconsistent with the individual's moral responsibility. Buddhism, like Hinduism, accepts the dogma of transmigration and the law of karma. As the individual has his cycle of births, he carries with him into each birth the balance or disbalance of his previous existences and deeds with their inevitable compensation or expiation. Nāgārjuna, the founder of the Mādhyamika doctrine of the void, observes in his *Suhṛllekha*: "Exhibit morality (śīla), faultless and sublime, unmixed and spotless, for morality is the supporting ground of all eminence, as the earth is of the moving and immovable". Life, mind and śīla are all focussed towards fervent charity and goodness that facilitate the mystical insight. All the other "perfect virtues" (pāramitās) take care of themselves. Here the moral ideal, as stated in the *Bodhicaryāvatāra*, (The Path of Light) is—

"I desire to be protector to those who need protection,
 A guide to those who wander in the desert,

And a ship, a landing stage and a bridge,
To those who see the Shore,
A lamp to those who need a lamp,
A couch to those who need a couch,
A slave to all beings who need a slave”.

The Active Virtues of the Bodhisattva

Compassion, pity or benevolence in Mahāyāna Buddhism is practised without any belief in the substantial reality of the “mendicant”, the “alms” and the “donor”. The three elements—thought, deed and object—completely disappear with the recognition of the nothingness of the ego (*trikoṭipariśuddha-maitrī*). Just as in Hindu Yoga, wisdom emerges after the total merging and disappearance of subject, object and knowledge relation in a transcendental consciousness, in Mahāyāna *jhāna* or yoga, it is the outcome of the same merging and disappearance of servitor, object and service in the non-dual Buddha Essence, “Vacuity” or Non-substantiality, the Plane of the Ideals (*dharmadhatu*). Yet the Bodhisattva harnesses all his spiritual resources for keeping his body and mind ever alert for service to creatures (*vīrya*). For this reason in particular the detailed analysis of the perfect virtues (*pāramitās*) and of the psychological background of their practice in the activistic career of the Bodhisattva, marked by ten distinct stages (*bhūmis*—each of which is characterised by the maturation of ten moral qualities), as described in the Mahāyānist texts, deserves the attention of Western ethicists.

The Bodhisattva’s ways of wisdom, compassion and service converge in the Communion of the Universe in which millions of Buddhas from many worlds through immeasurable ages participate in universal illumination and salvation. Thus the Bodhisattva’s salvation is far different from this selfish salvation of the few *Pratyekas* and *Arhats*. Not until all are saved can the Pilgrim be at peace. Compassion is the law of laws, eternal harmony. “Compassion speaks: Can there be bliss when all that lives must suffer? Shalt thou be saved and hear the whole world cry?” Mahāyāna idealism in which were grounded the virtues or perfections (*pāramitās*) of Buddhahood for the relief of misery and ignorance of all sentient beings introduced a new ethics into the world, modern in its tone and grasp, that underlies the humanism, socialism, forbearance and goodwill of half of humanity in the East. To what extent charity

and benevolence flowed from Mahāyāna doctrines will be evident from the following vow that the Buddhist layman takes, in the words of Śāntideva, "To serve the creatures is to serve the Buddhas, it is to realise my end, to eliminate pain from the world, it is the vow by which I bend myself! If the suffering of the many is to cease by the suffering of a single one, the latter must work it out of compassion for others and for himself". Mahāyāna Buddhism developed the doctrine of vicarious suffering for the sin and ignorance of others, of the transference of merit and of the emancipation of mankind grounded in the metaphysical beliefs in the unity and interdependence of life, the nothingness of man's soul or ego and the universality and all-pervasiveness of the Buddha-nature.

The Positive Ethics of the Mahayana

The general criticism that Buddhism is negative, nihilistic and atheistic is one-sided and unfair. From the dialectic of void it is not negativism but something positive that emerges. Nāgārjuna observes: "If a man believes in the void, then he believes in all dharmas, mundane and supramundane. If he believes in the same, then he believes in the doctrine of emergence of all dharmas as effects from the combination of causal circumstances. If he believes in that, then he believes in the Four Noble Truths. If he believes in them, then he believes in emancipation". The ego and the world vanish, but there always remain in Buddhist thought man's transmigration and moral responsibility, carrying as he does the burden of his merits and demerits from birth to birth,—the endless cycle of saṃsāra and kleśa. Nāgārjuna, who is one of India's greatest intellectuals and one of the founders of the Mahāyāna, came from Vidarbha (Berar) and was a friend of the Sātavāhana at the end of the second or the beginning of the 3rd century A.D., but travelled widely throughout the country. He is the author of the Mādhyamika or the Middle Way, where he has developed the famous philosophy of Śūnyatā or void. In his use of the dialectic Nāgārjuna anticipates Hegel, in his uncompromising logic of negativism he forestalls Bradley, while in his stress of everything including idea, mind and self as relative and interdependent he marches abreast of modern physics and philosophy of science. I-tsing praises Nāgārjuna's *Suhṛllekha* (Letter to a Friend) very highly and mentions that in his day it was widely read and memorised in India. As early as the fifth century A. D. Kumārajīva translated

Nāgārjūna's biography into Chinese. That Buddhism gives a positive direction to man's ethical life is clearly indicated by its classification of human aims and goals. Two are negative, viz., the prevention of the rise of sinful and unwholesome states of mind and the abandonment of those states if these have already sprung up. But after the above two kinds of cessation (nirodha) we have the positive aims of the inducement of new wholesome states of existence and of their augmentation, development and perfection. The above analysis given in the Dīgha-nikāya makes Man the only measure of himself. The Vedānta equates Man with Brāhmaṇ, the Absolute or the Supreme Self. Buddhism equates Man with his own Becoming or Perfection, the apotheosis of the Pāramitās. If Brahmanical thought has stood for a social organisation, which is in conformity with the equilibrium of the cosmos, and identifies Dharma as the cosmic binding order, the eternal Truth holding its sway over the universe (Ṛta) and integrating and holding it together (dhāraṇāt dharmamityāhuḥ), Buddhism has stood for an ideal scheme of moral and social relations grounded on a discernment of the eternal, orderly sequence of things, internal and external, and of Man's own role in it.

The Mahayana more Dynamic than the Vedānta

In the emphasis of human goodness, dignity and perfection, Buddhism interprets Dharma practice as the Law of Altruism, complete, balanced and positive, as embodied in the Eight-fold Path and based on the laws of unity, continuity, metempsychosis and transience. The Buddha conceived that the accumulation of sins of karma through æons of years could be extinguished in a moment through a realization by the mind of its own rôle in the universe. Nor can such philosophy of human majesty and dignity and mystical self-dedication to the world and augmentation of altruism for the relief of collective misery be dismissed as sceptical, unreligious or irreligious. Man in Buddhism is "a lamp unto himself"; he holds to the truth within himself as to the only lamp and illumines and saves the world as well. For this Buddhism prescribes elaborate sets of exercises of meditation. Buddhism has its own articles of faith, its miracles of illumination, wisdom and sacrifice and its own levels and vistas of mystical experiences. It also inculcates devotion and faith (śaraṇāgati), surrender to the Tathāgata, who shows the Way. "As the gods worship Indra, so should one

worship the man from whom he learns the Norm. The teacher, being honoured, pleased there at, from his deep knowledge doth expound the Norm", says the Sutta-nipāta. Again, in the Dhammapada, we read, "Whosoever seeks refuge in the Buddha, the Doctrine, and the Order, and with correct understanding visualises the Four Noble Truths—this is a secure resort, this is the safest refuge (śaraṇa). By taking such refuge a man is freed from all pain". The above sentiments constitute the core of early Buddhist faith and devotion that are inconsistent with scepticism. Buddhism could not have succeeded as a mere rational creed or an ethical movement without its beyond-human attitude, conquering and rising above life, mind and the world. Even its all-pervasive sweep of compassion, pity and service is grounded on what is really a mystical experience of the identity of the human self and the other or the unsubstantiality of both the human self (anātmānam) and the world. The Mahāyāna and the Vedānta equally identify morality and enlightenment and vice with ignorance. In the Vedānta the fullness or non-duality of Self, the abolition of the empirical self and saṃsāra is both the condition and summit. The Mahāyāna, like the Vedānta, is not sceptical at all, but unlike the Vedānta, the Mahāyāna introduces into the Absolute, Suchness or the Buddha nature, dwelling in every being, a kind of compassion beyond men and things. The pure Suchness or Thatness (Tathatā) which is inherent in every man "perfumes", in the words of Aśvaghoṣa, and protects him by its infinite love (maitrī) and compassion (karuṇā) and leads him to the understanding of Suchness and of the absolute oneness (samatā) of the universe and the way of morality. Such is the activism of the transcendent Suchness, the quintessence at once of the ultimate intelligence and the profound compassion (mahā-karuṇā). Thus Buddhism, more than the Vedānta, makes the Enlightened One also the "Great Compassionate One", and directs the Buddhas and the Bodhisattvas back from their own self-culture and blissfulness to the path of infinite love and service through infinite numbers of aeons. Representing a total awareness of the self, the not-self and the world and viewing society and its institutions solely from a logical viewpoint, Buddhism was more dynamic than the Vedānta in its philosophical outlook and much stronger in its rejection of sacerdotalism, caste and superstition in its social ideal.

Buddhism inculcated not merely the spirit of active compassion, sacrifice and sharing but also moral courage (vīrya) in driving out

all fears and superstitions and in pursuing an alert, vigorous, dynamic life of sharing and service to sentient creatures. It repudiated the theory of caste stratification based on heredity, wealth and colour as well as the theory of the divine origin of kingship. It upheld a contractual theory of the origin of state and society as human institutions. These are founded in human consensus (*mahājana sammati*). Springing from the bosom of democratic republican communities of the sub-Himālayan region, Buddhism, however, picked up no quarrel with the new Mauryan monarchy and imperialism. On the other hand, its emphasis of the moral role of states and governments led to the development of the later Mauryan ideal and policy of Dharma-vijaya that enabled Aśoka and Kanishka to establish for the first time a Greater India beyond the confines of the country.

Causes of the Spread of the New Gospel

The spread of Buddhism or Dharmavijaya abroad was easy and quick for several reasons. First, Buddhism, on the whole weighed the scale against dogmas and creeds and for principles of piety and good conduct (*śīla*) and was accordingly a civilizing gospel like Christianity. From its early phase Buddhism was saturated with a profound love of man and inalienable benevolence and compassion that had great practical consequences for the amelioration of the masses. In the later phase of Buddhism this fine ethical quality of disinterested and universal magnanimity received unique stress, leading to the ideal and practice of all-pervading altruism and sharing getting better of self-salvation and world flight.

Secondly, Buddhism emphasised that the principles of morality, comfort and happiness of man could only be augmented and spread among the people by a progressive state rather than by sects and schools of philosophy. Like Christianity, Buddhism did not aim at rejection but fulfilment of the law, but unlike it, it upheld the positive doctrine of the active rôle of the state as the builder of the cultural and moral order. The Buddha in his discourses often drew a parallelism between the secular monarch bent on establishing the empire of righteousness and the spiritual monarch, both being enlightened, perfect persons. The umbrella is the Buddhist symbol of suzerainty of both types of *mahāpuruṣa*. Like the spiritual monarch—the Bodhisattva—it is the King or the King Emperor, who could initiate a new moral and spiritual culture,

and disseminate among a congeries of subject races and peoples nobler ideals of conduct for their enduring happiness (*rāja-dharma-pravartakāḥ*). Thus Buddhism moralised politics and the state. Mauryan and Kushan imperialism obtained its new spiritual mission in backward and foreign countries from the Buddhist positive ideal of *Dharmavijaya*, enjoined upon a universal monarchy.

Thirdly, in dealing with popular customs, rituals and observances Buddhism adopted a policy of tolerance and forbearance, such as the *Mahābhārata* laid down in connection with the colonisation of new territories. But Buddhism widened the scope of this liberal policy by enunciating the principle that popular customs and traditions should be sought to be transformed by setting forth the superiority of other customs and traditions on the basis of a careful-comparative study and appreciation of the divergent viewpoints of social culture. *Mahāyāna* adaptation to new faiths and cults was no doubt facilitated by its rich imagery and symbolism as varied expressions of the dynamic Buddha-nature and also of the states of consciousness, its spirit of social idealism and tolerance and the replacement of the ideal of the austere arhat by the godly householder. On the other hand, the *Mahāyāna* was itself transformed as it won the acceptance of new peoples and cultures which contributed to its development.

Fourthly, the transformation from the early, simple and rational *Hīnayāna* to the later complex, devotional and ecclesiastical *Mahāyāna*, with its galaxy of gods and śaktis, saints and angels as objects of worship, its eternal *Buddhakhetta*, *Tuṣita* and *Sukhāvatī* paradises of *Maitreya*, *Amitābha* and numerous other sanctified, adoring *Bodhisattvas* and its soul-stirring legends of miracles wrought by saints in the name of salvation, satisfied the social and religious affections of the less advanced peoples in new lands. Conversion to Buddhism was also powerfully aided by *Mahāyāna* Buddhist sculpture and fresco-painting that depicted the paradises of the Buddhas as well as innumerable *Bodhisattvas*, angels, *apsaras* and saints, stimulating the faith and giving hope and assurance to the faithful. *Mahāyāna* metaphysics, miracle and art, all fed both intellect and imagination. *Mahāyāna* image and ritual, dramatisation and allegory substituted and metamorphosed popular rites and forms of worship of foreign races and peoples without detriment to central Buddhist dogmas and doctrines. Thus the

Mahāyāna could launch upon a successful career of foreign 'digvijaya'.

Fifthly, the Buddhist view of life contributed in India towards the abolition of slavery and the establishment of principles of Danda-samatā (equality of punishment) and Vyavahāra-samatā (equality in law-suits). It clarified the rights and duties of the Buddhist laity on the principles of reciprocity and thus paved the way for an equality of private rights of persons, not excluding even foreigners. Buddhism thus definitely contributed towards improvement of the moral tone of society. Sixthly, the establishment of hospitals, rest-houses, animal houses, watering sheds for men and beasts and other humanitarian institutions spread goodwill, humaneness and altruism all round, and improved manners, rules of propriety and decorum and laws of the land everywhere.

Finally, Buddhism advocated education among the masses and established several cosmopolitan universities, such as Nālandā, Taxilā, Valabhī, Vikramaśilā, Anurādhapura and Śrī-Vijaya where the major contemporary creeds, cults and dogmas were carefully studied, and their attitudes thoroughly appreciated and where special instruction was imparted in medical science, chemistry and the various practical arts and crafts in order to enable monks, scholars and pupils to undertake successfully their grand mission of serving the lowly, the oppressed and the disinherited in society everywhere. The keynote of the cosmopolitan Buddhist universities was freedom of thought and discussion. This was an article of Buddhist faith which warned all men not to accept anything as reasonable and good on mere study of books of authority or because of its logical argument and nice formulation, or because it is reached after careful meditation and going through much penance, or because after all it comes from one's own accredited teacher, in the words of the Anguttara. It was the Buddhist universities that through their mutual forbearance, tolerance and respect for one another's doctrines and freedom of discussion, teaching and promulgation that made Buddhism a universal religion, and gave to the world, for the first time, the ideal of co-operation of all faiths for a true understanding of the essentials (sārabodhi).

On the other hand, nothing has contributed more to the extinction of Buddhism in India than the destruction of large Buddhist monasteries, first by the iconoclastic Ephthalite Huns, who sacked and devastated the Buddhist monasteries and art workshops

of Gāndhāra and Uddiyāna, and then by the Turko-Afghans who destroyed the monasteries and workshops of Bihar and Bengal. As Hiuen-Tsang visited Gāndhāra in 630 A.D., a century after the invasion of the Huns led by the Attila of India, Mihiragula, he sadly lamented on the destruction of the brilliant civilization of Gāndhāra and Uddiyāna thus: "The royal race (in Puṣkalāvati) is wiped out and the country has been annexed to the Kingdoms of Kapiśa. Towns and villages are almost empty and abandoned, and only a few inhabitants are seen in the country. One corner of the royal tower (Peshawar) contains about a thousand families There are a million Buddhist monasteries which are in ruins and deserted. They are overgrown with weeds and they make only a mournful solitude. The majority of the stūpas are also in ruins". In Uddiyāna, the present Swat valley, "there were formerly fourteen hundred Buddhist monasteries which contained eighteen thousand monks; now they are almost abandoned or the number of their inhabitants is greatly reduced". Seldom has barbarian iconoclasm worked havoc on such a terrible scale on a civilization, fresh, beautiful, and rich in its promise as in Bactria, Gāndhāra, Uddiyāna, Kashmir and the Punjab in the 5th century A.D.

The Second Holy Land of the Buddhists—Cosmopolitan Gandhara

Mahāyāna Buddhism came to flower in the first century A.D., in the north-west of an expanded Indian world that established intimate trade contacts with Central Asia, China, Asia Minor, Egypt, Greece and Rome and welcomed and assimilated Hellenistic, Semitic, Iranian and Chinese currents of culture. With its highly devotional, ceremonious and ecclesiastical character and the ethical impulsion of its doctrine of universal salvation of all living beings on the earth, a salvation vouchsafed by the Divine grace of innumerable Buddhas and Bodhisattvas, the Mahāyāna became a dynamic missionary world-religion, and started on its long and fateful treks and voyages on the roads of the Asian continent. Stcherbatsky observes: "The history of religions has scarcely witnessed such a break between new and old within the pale of what nevertheless continues to claim common descent from the same religious founder". The spread of Buddhism into Asia would not have been, however, possible but for this extraordinary metamorphosis. The source of the upsurge, teaching and spread of the new dispensation

was cosmopolitan Gāndhāra, Kashmir and the Punjab, the outer fringe of the expanded, heterogenous, fluent Indian world, that saw for about five centuries an unparalleled religious enthusiasm in the construction of a thousand stūpas, chapels and monasteries with images of the dhyānī Buddhas and Bodhisattvas that gradually transformed the north-west into another Buddhist holy land. Even the common people in distant Khotan had small stūpas of their own in thousands with icons receiving their daily devout worship. This is the testimony of Fa-Hien, who in the beginning of the 5th century found in Gāndhāra and the Punjab numerous large monasteries accommodating many thousands of monks of both the Hīnayāna and the Mahāyāna schools. Many sacred relics found their way from the holy land of the Ganges and were enshrined in stūpas built for the purpose of bestowing health, peace and honour to princes and peoples; and legends were created about the transport of the Buddha himself to this region for working miracles, and certain north-western sites came to be associated with famous episodes in the lives of the Bodhisattva. In Puṣkalāvātī (Peshawar) Aśoka built a colossal stūpa at the site, where the Buddha in a previous life had made "the gift of his eyes", and Kanishka at the spot where four of the Buddhas of the previous existences sat under the pipal tree. It was here that the latter also built the celebrated stūpa and tower filled with the sacred relics. Buddha's alms-bowl was also here enshrined in a stūpa and a monastery, as found by Fa-Hien, until after many vicissitudes it was taken to Iran. Similarly the legends of Hārīti and Vessantara had also their locations sanctified by stūpas in Puṣkalāvātī, as the legends of "the gift of the body" to the tigress and of flesh to the falcon were celebrated by stūpas in the province of Uddiyāna. In Takṣaśilā (Taxilā), the Emperor Aśoka erected a stūpa on the site where the Buddha in one of his previous existences made "the gift of his head". North-west of Taxilā on the right bank of the Indus, another stūpa was erected on the spot where in one of his previous existences Buddha made "the gift of the body" to the hungry tigress. Sungyan mentioned in about 520 A.D. that the sounds of the Buddhist bells were heard during the whole night and filled the valleys in Uddiyāna. Kashmir was also the home of an intense Buddhist faith with stupas built by Asoka and Kanishka. It seemed that the peace and serenity of the groves of Bodh-Gayā, Sāranāth and Srāvastī came to be

permanently settled on the rugged landscape of Afghanistan, Punjab and Kashmir that became in the early centuries of this millennium the foci of an immense religious awakening and the spearheads of a mighty proselytising drive across the caravan routes of Middle Asia.

Hiuen-Tsang in the seventh century (629-645) mentioned that Aśvaghōṣa, Nāgārjuna, Āryadeva and Kumāralabdha (Kumāralāta) were contemporaries, calling them the four suns which illumined the world. It appears that all the four were living for some time together in North-West India in the 2nd century A.D. Kalhaṇa notes that Nāgārjuna was the only lord of the land in Kashmir at the time of the Kushān emperors. The emergence of the Gothic Indo-Afghan sculpture in Gāndhāra in the third century A.D., of which the most notable examples have come from the Kabul valley, especially from Hadda near Jalalabad, also testifies to the spontaneity and intensity of the new religious upsurge, among the Bactrians, Kushāns and other converts of foreign origin. The third century witnessed also the composition of the Saddharma-puṇḍarīka and Āryasūtra's Jātakamālā, two of the principal texts of Mahāyāna Buddhism and, perhaps, also of the Lalitavistāra and portions of the Divyāvadāna; while the kāvyas and plays of Aśvaghōṣa, the minstrel of the Mahāyāna, migrated even to distant Turfan on the fringe of the Gobi desert. It also saw the greatest glory of the university of Taxila. Important since the Maurya times as the chief centre of medical studies, Taxila became the most important cosmopolitan centre of learning and the principal home of Mahāyāna philosophy under the Kushāns until its ruthless destruction by the White Huns in the fifth century, when the university of Nālandā came into prominence. At Taxila in the late 2nd century A.D. there flourished the celebrated Sautrāntika philosopher Kumāralāta, who was Aśvaghōṣa's junior contemporary. From Aśvaghōṣa, who was a peripatetic teacher, preacher, musician and play-wright during Kanishka's time, to the distinguished brothers Asaṅga and Vasubandhu, who developed about the beginning of the fifth century the Yogācāra or idealistic school in Puṣṣapura, this ancient Buddhist capital of the Kushān Emperors radiated the intellectual and artistic influences associated with the development and spread of Mahāyāna Buddhism.

The Teaching of Kumārajīva in China

Within a few centuries, the Mahāyāna spread far and wide. It went to China, to Central Asia, to Korea, Japan and Southern Asia. As early as 121 B.C., huge golden images, supposed to be Buddhist, were found in the desert of Turkestan as a general of the Chinese Emperor Wu pursued the Hsiung-nu tribesmen deep into the desert. These were carried to the Imperial capital and set up in the palace. In 2 B.C., a Yue-chi transmitted certain Buddhist scriptures to the Chinese. In A.D. 65, Emperor Ming sent a delegation to the "Western Regions" for bringing the teachings of the Buddha. Some Buddhist scriptures and a portrait of the Buddha were obtained; while two Indian monks, Kaśyapa Mātāṅga and Dharmaratna, also accompanied them and settled in the Imperial capital for translating the texts into Chinese. Mātāṅga's translation of the Forty Sayings of the Buddha is extant. The first Buddhist monastery called the "White Horse Monastery" was then established in China, the first of its kind in that country. An Indian monk came to the court of Emperor Fei (A.D. 240-253), with Chinese translations of Buddhist law. By imperial edict, the Chinese monks were now compelled to conform to it. A Chinese pupil of the Indian monk named Chu Shih-hing travelled to Chinese Turkestan, where Buddhism was already flourishing, and brought back many ancient editions of Buddhist texts.

Tradition attributes the introduction of Buddhism into China and the Indo-Scythian countries by Kaśyapa Mātāṅga and Dharmaratna, whom Chinese ambassadors found engaged in missionary enterprise in 68 A.D. In Central Asia, a Kharoshthī manuscript of the Prākṛta Dhammapada, written in the script of the 2nd century A.D. has been discovered, along with a manuscript of the dramas of Aśvaghōṣa written about that time. With the visit of Kumārajīva (344-413) to China in 401 A.D., followed by his great translation work in the capital, is usually dated the first systematic propagation of the Mahāyāna in China. This was almost contemporaneous with the visit to India of the Chinese pilgrim Fa-Hien who was a disciple of Kumārajīva. In 400 A.D. Fa-Hien saw in Kashgar "over one thousand priests, all belonging to the Hīnayāna", and in Khotan "several tens of thousands of Buddhists, most of them belonging to the Mahāyāna". Even in far-off Karashahr and in Lop-nor, "there were some four thousand and more priests, all

belonging to the Hinayāna". By 453 A.D. Buddhism was adopted as the state religion of northern China by the Wei Dynasty. The rapid spread of Buddhism in China was largely due to the teaching of Kumārajīva, who taught many disciples in Chao-nan (401-413). Among them were some very famous Chinese philosophers, such as Seng-chao (384-414) and Tao-Sheng (-434). Through both these influential thinkers the basic Mahāyāna conceptions of the universality and originality of the Buddha-nature, derived from the Parinirvāṇa-sūtra, and the relativity of truth, stressed by the Mādhyamika school, came to be an integral part of Chinese thinking. The Mahāyānist dictum of the identification of Saṃsāra and Nirvāṇa, of suffering and enlightenment was paraphrased by Tao-Sheng thus: "The Enlightenment of Mahāyāna Buddhism is not to be sought outside the Wheel of Birth and Death. Within it one is enlightened by the affairs of birth and death". Again he observes: "If one sees Buddha, one is not seeing Buddha. When one sees there is no Buddha, one is really seeing Buddha". Between 520-526 also came to China from India an almost mythical figure, Bodhidharma, who taught the system of Ch'an (Sanskrit dhyāna) to Hui-ko (486-593). In China, both the universal Buddha-nature or the Universal Mind school and the school of Void persisted, and each of them blended with Taoism and was absorbed into the development of the Chinese mind. Hiuen-Tsang, who introduced in China the school of Yogācāra or subjective idealism, did not have many followers in China although his junior contemporary I-tsing called him the "Tripiṭaka Teacher of China" and placed him on an equal footing with Paramārtha and Kumārajīva. The Yogācāra school was limited in its influence to small groups of the elite. It was actually from Kumārajīva and his many influential disciples that there stemmed the tradition of Chinese Buddhism which profoundly influenced the later refinements of Taoism and Neo-Confucianism. The modern Chinese philosopher Fung-Yu-lan observes: "The idea of the Universal Mind is a contribution of India to Chinese philosophy. Before the introduction of Buddhism, there was in Chinese philosophy only the mind, but not the Mind. The Tao of the Taoists is the "mystery of mysteries", as Lao Tzu put it, yet it is not Mind. After Kumārajīva, Seng-chao and Tao-Sheng there is in Chinese philosophy not only mind, but also Mind. The Buddhist monk Tao-Sheng taught for many years at Lushan in Kiangsi that became a principal centre of Buddhist learning. His

eloquence was such that it was said that when he spoke even the stones nodded assent.

The Mahayana—a Far-reaching Humanistic Movement in Asia

The teaching of Kumārajīva and Bodhidharma in China was reinforced by the visit from India of a continuous, nay unending, chain of learned, indefatigable monk-pilgrims. A ceaseless, self-forgetful missionary zeal and activity, that braved the burning sun and the scorching heat of the Taklamakan desert, the banditry of the wilds and snow-covered mountain ranges of the Hindukush and the Pamirs or the risks of precarious voyages in unknown eastern seas were characteristic of the new leaven of the Mahāyāna which profoundly transformed the spirit of Buddhism by becoming in both principle and practice a universal religion. In the oasis cities of the northern and southern trade routes in Central Asia were built numerous Buddhist shrines with hundreds of images in clay or wood, and frescoes and banners bearing the impress of the motifs and techniques of Mathurā, Sārnāth and Ajāntā. The artists were Central Asiatic, Iranian, Armenian, Syrian, Scythian, Turk and Chinese, but the mother schools for all were Sārnāth and Ajanta that defined the proportions of the ideal of manly beauty of the Compassionate One and His various incarnations. Soon China had numerous temples and images. The first emperor of the Sui dynasty (589-618) alone ordered the construction of 3,792 temples, and caused 106,580 new images to be made and 1,508,904 images to be repaired. Among the ancient and more celebrated Buddhist images the following may be mentioned: the colossal Buddha surrounded by thousands of smaller Buddhas at Yun-kang, Shansi (5th century A.D.), the Bodhisattva in the caves of Lung-men with emperors and empresses appearing as donors and bringing offerings (6th century A.D.); the bronze images of Amitābha Buddha and attendant Bodhisattvas in the Tuan-fang shrine (593 A.D.); the images of Kuan-shih-yin (which is Kumārajīva's translation of the term Avalokiteśvara from the Puṇḍarīka) that were worshipped in all Buddhist shrines in China by the 6th century A.D.; and, the vast numbers of images in the Caves of a Thousand Buddhas at Tun-huang (6th century A.D.) The march of Buddhism to China along the trade-routes and oasis cities of Central Asia was associated with an exuberant literary

and artistic activity, promoted by the inward and outward journeys of traders, scholars, students and monks from the 4th to the 10th century. Many painters became monks and many monks painters in order to decorate Buddhist shrines and caves; while in the seats of learning and in households painting was taught as a fine art. Buddhism gradually assumed a Chinese pattern in the land of its adoption with a stress of the bliss of the Blessed Land or the Western Paradise, the compassion of Kuan-yin and the adoration of the spirits of the departed. India was the Pure Land of the West for the Chinese faithful, and the acceptance of India and her thought and culture as something transcending the world had a most salutary effect upon Chinese life and culture. From China Buddhism crossed into Korea in the 4th century. The missionary was a Buddhist monk Sundao. In the 6th century the ruler of the south-western state of Korea sent missionaries, images and sacred books to the Emperor of Japan. For a few decades there was opposition from the native religion of Shintoism. But when the Empress Suikao came to the throne in Japan in 588 A.D., her nephew Shotaku Taishi, who was regent, built the first Buddhist temple in the country and also erected hospitals, dispensaries and alms-houses. Gradually Buddhism spread among the common people and reached some of its finest phases in Japan.

The Nāgārjunikoṇḍa inscriptions record that fraternities of monks converted Kashmir, Gāndhāra, China, Chīlāta, Tośālī, Aparānta, Vaṅga, Vanavāsī, Yavana, Damila, Palura and the island of Ceylon. It was the new and higher religion of the Bodhisattva which went forth from the bosom of Indian culture in its evangelising mission across the highlands and deserts of Central Asia into China and across the Indian Ocean into the Island India of the East. Indian philosophy, religion and art, all now entered their golden age. Human history can hardly record a more fruitful and far-reaching humanistic movement. Not even the propagation of Christianity could show the peaceful, many-sided advance in civilization associated with the spread of the Mahāyāna.

CHAPTER XV

THE GOLDEN AGE OF CULTURE: THE GUPTA RENAISSANCE AND AFTER

The Brahmanical Renaissance under the Imperial Guptas

The Imperial Guptas ushered in the Golden Age of India when her synthesizing genius gave birth to some of the world's best creations in art, literature, philosophy and religion, and a humane and catholic social scheme that established its replica in distant countries in South-east Asia. The golden epoch which dazzled the course of art, religion and culture of Asia from the 4th to the end of the 8th century witnessed the glory of the great Buddhist universities with their hundreds of students from the rest of Asia, the embassy of Yaśovarman to China, the missions of Padmasambhava, Śāntarakṣita and Kamalāsila to Tibet and the power and grandeur of the Buddhist Pāla empire with its artistic revival (from the seventh to the thirteenth centuries) and influence upon the art and religion of South-east Asia. Humanity lived five privileged centuries in India, under the Guptas and Harsha and their successors, comparable to the age of Pericles in Athens, of Augustus in Rome and of Elizabeth in England. It was the epoch of the development of the six Brahmanical philosophic systems, the poetry and drama of Kālidāsa, Bhāravi, Kumārādāsa, Daṇḍī and Viśākhadatta, the great redactions of the epics and the Pūraṇas, the metaphysics of Āsanga, Vasubandhu and Dīnnāga, the astronomy of Āryabhaṭa and Varāhamihira, and the plastic art of Mathurā, Vidisa, Sārnāth and Nālandā. It was the heyday of the universities of Kashmīr, Nālandā, Vikramasila and Valabhi, the Chinese pilgrimages to the holy land of the Ganges and the mountainous Gandhāra and Kashmīr and the Hinduization of South-east Asia. India's influence and status in Asia were in this period abundantly evident from the Ceylonese embassy to Samudragupta (about 360 A.D.), Harsha's embassy to China (641 A.D.), the four missions of Wang-Hieun-Tse (643-657 A.D.) to Kananj, Yaśovarman's embassy to China (731 A.D.), the mission of Śāntarakṣita and Padmasambhava to Tibet, the Pallava contribution to the colonial development and art of the

East till the close of the 8th century, the construction of the monastery at Nālandā by Bālaputradeva, king of Suvarṇadvīpa and finally the rise of the Pāla Empire (725-1197) with its suzerainty extending from Gandhāra to Kalinga under Dharmapāla (770-810 A.D.) and its extensive missionary activities in Nepal, Tibet, Southern India, Ceylon and Java. For three centuries after the decline of the Gupta power and the Hun occupation of the Punjab and Malwa the lamp of culture and learning was shining throughout the land, as Hiuen-tsang found, from Kashmir to Kāñci and from Valabhī to Tāmralipti. The emperors Harsha, Yaśovarman, Nāgabhaṭṭa II of the Pratihāra dynasty and Dharmapāla of Bengal kept alive the Gupta traditions by their successful resistance of the invasion of foreigners and noble patronage of culture and learning. In fact the great Imperial Gupta tradition constituted the classical framework of Indian culture through the ages, utilised rather than obliterated by the Moslem and the British.

The efflorescence of the Gupta age was the culmination of the Brāhminical revival that began centuries ago with Pushyamitra and with the Sātavāhanas and that gave India the popular name "the country of the Brāhmaṇs" as mentioned by Hiuen-Tsang in the 7th century. After the fall of the Śuṅgas in the first century B.C., the republican Yaudheyas, who extended their sway from Rājputanā to the Punjab, the Bhāraśivas, who ruled over a large part of Northern India and performed ten Aśvamedha sacrifices, and the Vākātakas, who ruled Central India from their capital at Nandivardhan, maintained successfully the Brāhmanic national resistance against the attack of the Yavanas and the Kushāns. It is true that the Yavanas and the Kushāns carved out large portions of the North, but they were no foreigners. Bactrian potentates and Kushān monarchs were adherents of the new religions of India—Bhāgavatism and Buddhism. Kadphises II was a convert to Śaivism; and Kanishka, in spite of his Zoroastrian leanings, was a convert to Mahāyāna Buddhism. Thus the Scythian and Kushāna occupation of the North for about three centuries and a half shed to a large extent its foreign character and stamp. And for these three centuries and a half India was completely free from foreign inroads.

The National Resistance Against the Sakas and Huns

The founder of the Gupta house was Candragupta; who as a result largely of his marriage with a Licchavi princess, could rise

into power and established himself as master of the Ganges valley as far as Prayāga. In A.D. 330, he was succeeded by young Samudragupta, who at once set forth on a digvijaya, similar to that idealised by Kālidāsa as the first duty of a Kshatriya ruler. His dominion extended to as far as Malabār and the Tanjore valley in the south to Mālwā in the west and to Kāmarūpa in the east. After conquering the whole of Āryāvarta, Samudragupta celebrated the horse-sacrifice and struck coins bearing the legend, Aśvamedha-parākramaḥ and depicting a horse standing before the sacrificial post. He was also a good musician and a poet. He obtained the title of the poet king (kavirāja), used to play on the lyre and interested himself in religious discussions. The famous Mahāyāna patriarch, Vasubandhu, was one of his counsellors. His son Candragupta II Vikramāditya succeeded to the throne in A.D. 380. He transferred his capital to Ayodhyā whence he set out for the conquest of Western Mālwā and Sourāshṭra, that were then under the rule of the Śakas. His victory against the Śaka king is suggested in Bāṇa's Harṣa-charita as well as in a few other works such as the Kāvya-mimāṃsā of Rājaśekhara and the Śṛṅgāra-prakāśa of Bhoja. He lived for sometime in Ujjain after his conquest of Western India, as a result of which the Gupta Empire obtained access to the important ports of Broach and Sopara on the Arabian Sea. Thus the wealth of the Egyptian and Roman trade began to flow into the cities of the Ganges valley. Candragupta II Vikramāditya's residence in Ujjain after the signal victory over the Śakas lent support to the legend of Vikramāditya Śakāri's court at Ujjain being adorned by the "nine gems" including Kālidāsa and Varāhamihira. Candragupta II Vikramāditya had one of his daughters, Prabhāvatī Guptā, married to Rudrasena II, the Vākāṭaka ruler of Central India and the Deccan. After the premature death of her husband, Queen Prabhāvatī Guptā became regent for two decades on behalf of her son and carried on the administration for a number of years under the supervision of her illustrious father. The little boy Pravarasena II later on composed a work entitled Setubandha which, according to its commentator, underwent revision at the hands of Kālidāsa at the instance of Vikramāditya. Candragupta II Vikramāditya was succeeded by Kumāragupta (415-455) and Skandagupta (455-480).

During this period India like Europe in the West was put to the most severe test. The Gupta Emperors had not the political

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